

GREECE AGAINST ROME
The History of Achaean League

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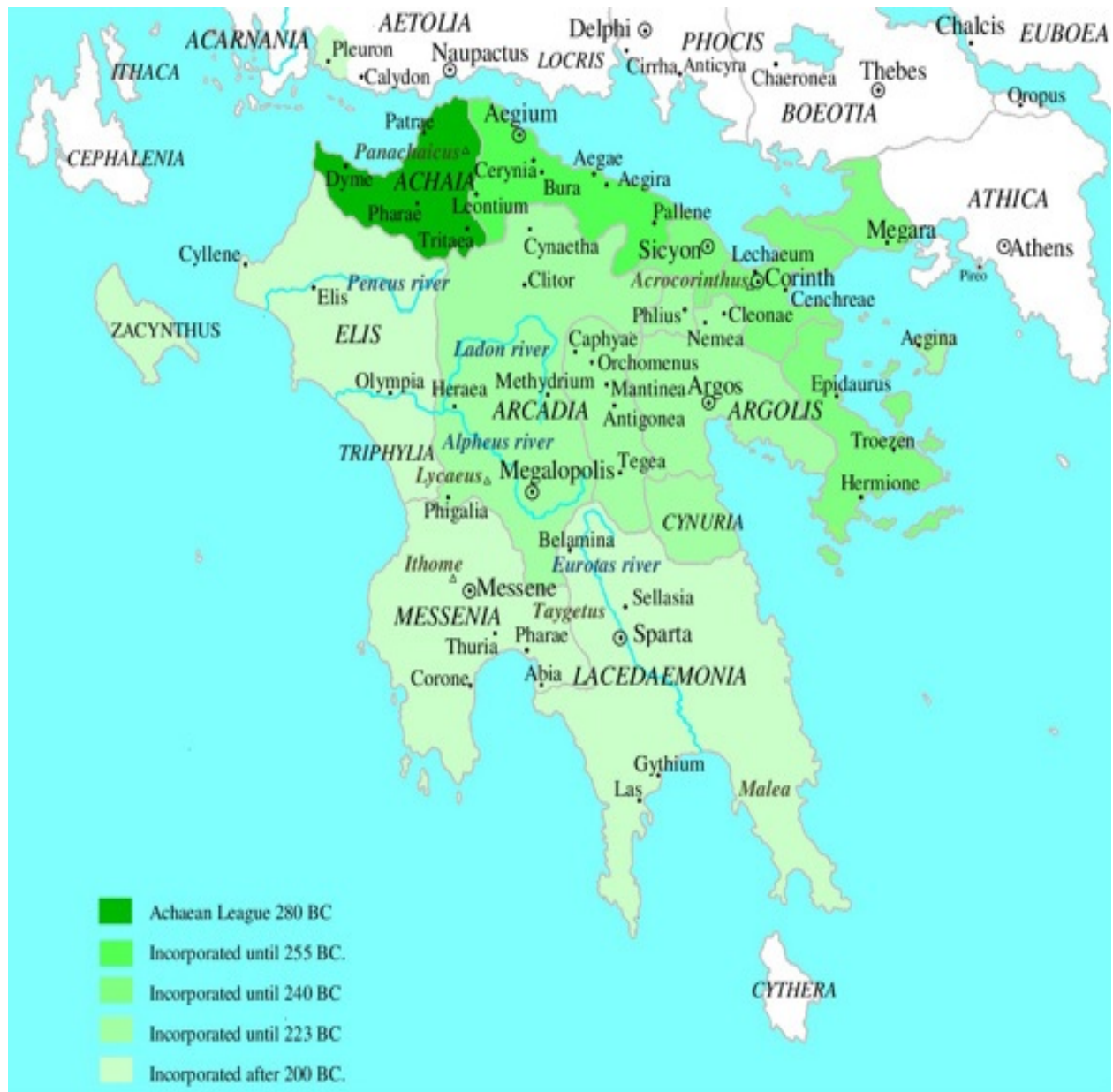


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AVGVSTO·PREGO·PARGÆ
FERDINANDI·IOSEPHÆQ·FILIO
GALLICORVM·TRIERARCA·HISPANIÆ·CLASSIS
OPTIMO·PATRE·VIII·FIJIORVM
VIXIT·LX·ANNORVM

MAPAS







PROLOGUE

A venerable practice, almost lost in our days of haste and urgency, asks that the author of a book look for some famous and prestigious personage who can arrange a prologue in which to praise the work and encourage its reading. Today's celebrities are out of the question: Who will convince them to read these pages, which I hope with a certain amount of boldness, unoccupied reader, you benevolent browse through. I would not lack scholars with solid knowledge who could warn you of the errors and inaccuracies they contain. But I prefer to spare me that trance, to free my acquaintances from that position, and to entrust myself with that task.

This book had its origins in the lively and sometimes heated discussions with siblings and family members at family gatherings in my mother's home after dinner many years ago, in the fall of 2003. These discrepancies, which I am sure many of us remember today, were caused by the international events of the Second Gulf War, and the subsequent US intervention in Iraq. The end of all of them was generally the same: How should we Europeans face a hegemonic power like the American

one? I may miss you, but this work is essentially about that.

In those agitated days, reviewing with a certain indolence the work of Livy, I stumbled upon a forgotten passage, perhaps even unread before, that caught my attention powerfully.

"Where are those vehement discussions in which you almost beat each other up, when at parties and meetings people were talking about Philip and the Romans?" Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, 32. 20

Look, I said to myself, others who are like us. And I began to track down who those Achaeans were, who more than two thousand years ago seemed to face the same issues and dilemmas as ours. And pulling the thread, a political institution of the last times of ancient Greece appeared before my eyes, which I must admit that in my ignorance I knew only very succinctly: the Sympoliteia of the Achaeans.

The Achaean League was a federation of Greek cities which, at the beginning of the 2nd century B.C., expanded sufficiently to aspire to become the institutional framework with which to articulate the fragmented politics of Hellenistic Greece. A unified and viable Greek state could thus have been created, capable of surviving the upheavals caused by the clashes between the great powers of the ancient Mediterranean. This possibility was especially real if we think that Rome, the great world power of the time, which was emerging as a dominant power through a succession of wars, showed a sincere interest in supporting the growth and development of that federation, to turn it into an instrument with which to ensure stability in the Greek world it was beginning to control.

If there were a universal mind, it could tell us about a déjà vu. Like then, a focus of decaying high civilization, before Greece, now Europe, perhaps the same subject over the centuries, tries to overcome its political fragmentation through a confederation, or federation, or union, or whatever we want to call it. And as then, the main world power, before Rome, now

America, is interested, or at least it seems so, in seeing that this union succeeds, always, of course, under its military and strategic supremacy in world politics.

The key question for us as Europeans is, of course, how to deal with the problems that arise and will arise in that situation: to what extent is the hegemony of a great power acceptable? To what extent can a confederation handle such tutelage? Is a complete independence of Europe from the US viable? It is obvious that any opinion that we issue now on these and other aspects of future EU-US relations is only those, a better or worse founded opinions, but always uncertain about the future. Should we therefore be content to think about the future and simply wait for the succession of events? I'm sure you do, but....

The humanists used a sentence very often: "Everything that can be done, said or thought of, has been done, said or thought of by the Greeks". And indeed, many of our problems and questions have already been presented to the ancient Greeks, who sought solutions to them with greater or lesser fortune. In fact, an essential part of our culture comes from the answers the Greeks gave to these questions. Can we then look for answers to our current unknowns in Greek history? Probably not, but this story has a great advantage over ours: it is finished, it has a beginning and an end, and we can therefore study the consequences of the Greeks' actions, since we know the end of the tragedy. Can we translate these results into our times? No, but it's also good to see that historical drama from start to finish. Perhaps we can understand where we are in "the screenplay", if we can say we are in it, recognize the possible options open to us, and observe the predictable results of the different responses we can give to our dilemmas.

Let's go back to the beginning. Looking for Achaean League History, I couldn't find any text about that time in Spanish that satisfied me. Those that exist are either narrated from the Roman point of view or are too brief to be useful to me. There

are great works by Walbank, Errington or Aymard, but well, to put it mildly, I'm very bad with languages. All I could do is to confront the historical sources, of which there are good Spanish translations, and to construct my own history.

To study the evolution of the Achaean League there are three essential ancient authors. The main source is Polybius of Megalopolis. His value is precious, as he was a Greek political leader of the second century BC, contemporary and a direct witness of the events, since he was the son of one of the political leaders of the federation, Lycortas de Megalopolis, and held high positions within the Achaean federal structure. Sent as a hostage to Rome in 167 B.C., he started to write a history of his time since the First Punic War, of enormous value to us. Unfortunately, much of his work has been lost. We have almost complete the books referring to the period up to 218 BC, but their information is diluted from that date, leaving only fragments, scarce but essential. Polybius is the most reliable source not only because of its proximity, but also because of his impartial and objective spirit. Sometimes its Achaean origin can be seen here, for example in the treatment it gives to other enemy states of the League, but its forced stay in Rome for many years made him see many things from a more universal point of view.

Almost as important is the second great source, the monumental History of Rome by Livy, an Augustean period historian. His work has the advantage that it preserves a continuous account of events between 220 and 168 B.C. and that it used the work of Polybius as a source of fundamental information. But his work focuses on Roman problems, dealing only with the Greeks when their issues cross with those of Rome, and is abruptly cut in 168 BC. He tends to be much more partial than Polybius, but by using him as the main source for his own narrative in Greek affairs, the objectivity of the Greek author is transmitted to the Roman.

The third great source is Plutarch. Greek author from the

time of Trajan and Hadrian, he wrote biographies of several of the personages of the period we are dealing with. The biographies that interest us most are those of Aratus de Sicyon, Agis and Cleomenes de Sparta, Philopoemen of Megalopolis, Titus Flaminus, Paulus Emilius, and to a lesser extent, Cato the Elder. Unfortunately, some of his comments are about anecdotal, entertaining but of limited historical value, although he is quite careful when passing on news and quotes from other older authors. In any case, it allows us to expand our data and to fill some gaps.

The result is that, by joining the news of the three, and adding data from other minor authors, especially Pausanias, essential to know the end of the Achaean League, we can trace a continuous story, centered on the three great figures of the end of Greek History: Aratus of Sicyon, Philopemen of Megalopolis and Polybius of Megalopolis, sometimes in a more dense way, sometimes less.

I have always tried to reconstruct the point of view of a Greek citizen interested in politics. We will see, therefore, at the beginning, how from the instability of the Greek world after Alexander the Great, the great character of Ancient History, the federal spirit emerges in different parts of Greece. How the Achaean League, a small-scale prefiguration of the ideals that today drive the formation of European identity, became, through various vicissitudes, the most important of the Greek confederations. And finally, how the Roman Republic, whose growth to the status of a great power is an obvious parallel to the unfinished development of the United States Republic in our days, is coming to the fore and intervening, ever more closely, in Greek affairs, until it reaches the final crisis. I have sacrificed terminological, chronological and geographical details, which I think would make the narrative more complicated and which are still subject to discussion. The dates are all from Before Christ, unless otherwise specified. Let's see how it goes.

BOOK I

ARATUS OF SICYON

1.

KINGS AND TYRANTS.

One night in the summer of 264 B.C., a seven-year-old boy ran in terror through the streets of the greek city of Sicyon. In the course of a coup d'état his house had been stormed and his father, Cleinias, the city's ruler, had been murdered. The little boy, called Aratus, had managed to flee, and in his daze he only managed to go to another house he knew well, that of his aunt Soso, brother of the leader of the revolt, Abantidas. The woman took pity on her nephew and decided, putting family ties ahead of political commitments, to bring him to safety. That same night, under the cover of her relationship with the new tyrant, she subtracted Aratus from the violence of the new leaders and surreptitiously took him out of the city and sent him to nearby Argos.

Sicyon was at that time a first-rate urban centre, flourishing since the archaic period, known for being a renowned cultural and artistic centre in the classical period,

from which talents such as the sculptor Lysippos and the painter Apelles emerged. At the time of Aratus it was considered the main painting centre of Greece. With the dissolution of Alexander the Great's empire, after his death in 323, Sicyon suffered the upheavals of the wars that his successors, the Diachodes, provoked. The city was looted and destroyed by Demetrius Poliorcetes in 303. It was rebuilt a short distance away, but internal struggles worsened since, and the main families began to compete violently for power. After the death of the tyrant Cleon about 270 years ago, Timoclidides and Cleinias, Aratus' father, were appointed supreme magistrates. After Timoclidides' death, Cleinias continued as only ruler, perhaps a tyrant, with the support of the Macedonian king of Egypt, Ptolemy II Philadelphus, confronted with the kings of Macedonia for hegemony in Greece. It was within this framework of struggles that Abantidas carried out his putsch in 264, probably with the active support of King of Macedonia, Antigonos II Gonatas.

Aratus was under the tutelage in Argos of his father's friends. He was educated in an aristocratic circle of exiles from different backgrounds, engaged in unrealistic conspiracies to return to their cities. Heir to one of the main families of Sicyon, he became, as a teenager, a leader of the opposition to tyranny, the head of a faction, in a world where the family lineage was the essential element of a man's destiny. Plutarch in his biography characterizes him as too interested in athletic competition.

He received a liberal education in Argos from his father's guests and friends, and seeing himself that his body was gaining height and strength, he became a sportsman, and so, competing in pentathlon, he reached five crowns. His portraits have an athletic air, and the perceptive and majestic nature of his countenance does not hide a certain coarseness and rudeness. Perhaps that's why he devoted less to the study of eloquence than was convenient for a statesman. Plutarch, Aratus 3

It must be said, contradicting Plutarch's opinion, in whose world, three centuries later, war was no longer a life activity, that courage and physical presence were precisely the qualities necessary for an exile, the leader of a party ready to regain power by force in his city. In addition, sport had taken on a major role in the Greek world. The old spirit of sacrifice for the homeland, the polis, had been replaced by the search for individual success, in the political, intellectual or economic field. And sport was one of those fields. It attracted crowds to the stadiums, to an increasingly professionalized show, and gave individuals a way to achieve public recognition, success. The great athletic games, such as the Olympics, the Nemean, the Pythics or the Isthmians, which were later joined by others founded by the Hellenistic monarchs, acquired an enormous public relevance that surpassed their original competitive or religious values, as in our days the great sports competitions televised all over the world. When Aratus became a sportsman, therefore, he did nothing but follow the trend of his time.

Soon he was surrounded by a motley group of characters - exiles, adventurers or mercenaries - ready to collaborate with him. We know Aristomachus and Xenocles, sicyonians exiled like him, Ecdelos, a megapolian dedicated to philosophy that we will meet again, Euphranor, a craftsman, Xenophilus, the leader of a gang of bandits. A small and heterogeneous but faithful party was thus formed, ready to act to restore Aratus to his position in Sicyon.

Before beginning his adventure, Aratus tried to seek support where other pretenders had done it before. We know that he tried to contact Antigonus II Gonatas, the king of Macedonia, and Ptolemy II Philadelphus, the Macedonian king of Egypt. In neither court did he find anything more than a kind sympathy. He could arouse compassion or curiosity, as a young boss of a misfortuned family, but the kings had their own pawns in the Greek political game. Antigonus may have given him hope, but in good relations with the tyrants who had occupied power in Scyon, kept him in suspense. Aratus then decided to

act on his own, relying on his ardor and youthful confidence.

The opportunity presented itself in 251. Abantidas, who after 13 years of rule in Sicyon seemed firm in his position, and while attending philosophy classes, was the victim of a conspiracy plotted by his own teachers, contraries to tyranny. Paseas, the father of Abantidas, took over the power, but was killed soon after by Nicocles, who imposed a violent dictatorship for four months. Sicyon found itself in the midst of a civil war, which almost cost it its independence. Aratus, barely twenty years old, saw the possibility of acting. Informed by a refugee of the existence of a stretch of wall accessible from the outside, he set out, prepared some handladders, and without much further preparation headed for his home town after outwitting Nicocles' agents.

His adventure almost failed before it was started. Arriving at the city walls in the middle of the night, the dogs of a farmer, who lived at the point chosen to jump over the wall, began to bark loudly. After a few moments of anguish the guard of the wall passed by, and ignoring the barking, the conspirators began to climb up. The operation was too slow, and Aratus, impatient at the approach of daybreak, decided to go up and, accompanied by a few, go directly to the palace of Nicocles. The bodyguards was taken by surprise, and rumours spread throughout the city, and very soon citizens began to arrive, ready to overthrow the tyrant. At last, when the news took shape that Aratus, the son of Cleinias, was in Sicyon, a multitude came to the house of Nicocles and set it on fire. The tyrant could barely escaped through some hidden galleries.

Now in power, Aratus summoned the exiles, scattered throughout Greece, back to his city. Some of them y their families had suffered almost fifty years of exile since the reconstruction of the city in the year 300. Aratus believed that with his gesture he could leave behind several decades of internal struggles, but his youthful impulsiveness betrayed him. The personal confrontations between the different factions not

only were very inflamed. The exiles, upon arrival, demanded the restitution of their old properties, something that the new owners were not at all willing to accept. Aratus had succeeded in avenging his father and regaining power for his family, but he found himself faced, with absolute political inexperience, with the uncontrollable escalation of the conflicts within his city.

Aratus urgently needed outside support to strengthen his fragile authority in Sicyon. In addition, he had to face the threat of Antigonus II Gonatas, the Macedonian king, who was unwilling to lose influence over a major greek city. The young Aratus, impetuous and inexperienced, did not seem to be a leader capable of facing the violent passions unleashed by the return of the exiles. In this delicate environment, he then made a resolution that must have seemed extravagant at the time: to apply for Sicyon membership in the Achaean League, a small federation of cities that was growing in the northern Peloponnese. This forces us to go back in time to explain its origins and development.

2.

THE CONFEDERATION OF THE ACHAEANS

The league or confederation of cities, the *sympoliteia*, was a very ancient political institution in the Hellenic world. For the Greeks every city, the polis, was totally independent and sovereign. But there were also cultural, religious or ethnic ties between them. This prompted the establishment of common institutions, although the full sovereignty of the cities, which established diplomatic relations and alliances in the manner of modern states, was universally accepted.

This state of affairs changed radically with the irruption of the Macedonians. From 338, after the Battle of Chaeronea, Philip II of Macedonia dominated all of Greece, crushed the political independence of the cities and forced the creation of a Panhellenic confederation, the League of Corinth, under Macedonian rule. After the death of his son Alexander the Great in 323, his confused succession among the generals of his army, and the subsequent disintegration of the Macedonian empire into rival kingdoms, Greece became the battleground of the struggle between the various Macedonian courts, which

competed very intensely for control of the main metropolises, playing with their traditional rivalries. For most of the cities it was impossible to successfully challenge these threats because of insufficient local resources to oppose the large armies of the Macedonian kings and their massive bribes. In most cases they were forced to accept the political subordination to the kingdom that prevailed at any given time.

It is in this scenario that the first Hellenistic leagues appear. These had a different essence from the alliances that the Greeks had known until then. In contrast with earlier confederations of archaic and classical times, the Hellenistic leagues were based on the cession of parcels of sovereignty by the cities to new common institutions: a federal assembly, with legislative and judicial powers, a joint army, and a corps of magistrates with executive powers. The cities thus lost some of their traditional independence, but not their individuality. This federal movement, which emerged spontaneously, made it possible to pool economic and military resources, giving the new leagues a certain capacity to resist the ambitions of the great Macedonian kingdoms.

The parallels with 20th century Europe, essentially after the disasters of the two World Wars, are evident. As in Greece, the fathers of European integration responded with their calls for a weak position against the great American and Russian giants, and for the cruel reality that the political fragmentation of Europe condemned the formerly powerful European nations to a subordinate role. As in Greece, there was a growing sense that national rivalries, the wars in which European nation-states had been waging since the beginning of the Modern Age, were only accelerating the process of political, military and financial dependence. And as in Greece, supranational unity was seen as the only way out.

The first great Hellenistic confederation was the Aetolian League. The Aetolians were a people located north of the Gulf of Corinth, considered by the other Greeks to be semi-barbarian.

Threatened directly by the mighty Macedonian kingdom, they were already organized as a confederation from the mid-4th century BC. This was based on a common army, meeting as an assembly twice a year, with a single general, and a permanent council acting as a joint government. From then on they became a rival to be considered by the kingdom of Macedonia, and a threat to the rest of the Greek states. The Aetolians, feared as evil pirates, penetrated into central Greece, dominated Delphi, the greatest panhellenic sanctuary, and their political influence reached the Peloponnese.

The Achaean League appeared in a different context. Achaia is the region located in the north of the Peloponnese, on the southern coast of the Gulf of Corinth. The tradition, collected by Polybius and Pausanias, presents the Achaeans as the remainder of the Mycenaean people, pushed by the Dorians towards this region during the heroic era. According to legend, they had maintained a monarchy incarnated by the heirs of Agamemnon, descendants of a certain Tisamenus, a legendary son of Orestes. This is particularly significant, as it seems to indicate that the Achaeans considered themselves to be the heirs of the Mycenaean world, and felt entitled to claim the dominion of the entire Peloponnese in the name of Agamemnon, who was, according to the myths, the great ruler of the entire peninsula. Under the reign of the last king, Oligo, of uncertain date, perhaps in the middle of the 7th century BC, the kingdom was attacked by the Spartans, who eliminated the monarchy and established local governments dominated by the landlord aristocracies. These independent cities retained their relationship with each other and formed a confederation on ethnic and religious bases.

This federation stood relatively apart from the great political events of the archaic and classical eras, and maintained a strict neutrality supported by its outlandish position towards the great centres of power, even when the Persians threatened Greece in the early 5th century BC. They maintained, perhaps only some of the cities, a certain sympathy for Sparta, but

when in 433, at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, an Athenian fleet attacked the Gulf of Corinth, the Achaeans signed an agreement with Athens against Corinth and Sparta. That alliance was obviously very brief. In the mid-4th century B.C., in the conflicts between Sparta and Thebes, the Achaeans supported Sparta, but when Epaminondas invaded the Peloponnese and defeated the Spartans, backed Thebans. It is clear that resistance capacity of Achaia was very limited, and although it remained neutral in the confrontations between the main Greek polis, it was forced to bow to the foreign military force when its geographical area was directly threatened. It was never taken into account by the great powers, except as auxiliaries or as a marginal field of operations.

The Macedonian invasion in the 4th century BC changed the situation. The Macedonian monarchy, as an imperial power, demanded total control of the territory and the submission of the individual polis. The Achaean cities, like the rest of the Greek cities, therefore had to accept military garrisons from successive Macedonian kings. Some of them even suffered the apparition of tyrants, ambitious aristocrats who sought the support of Macedonian kings to gain personal power in their city. In the early 3rd century B.C. the situation in the area tended to become unstable, as clashes between macedonian kingdoms, the Diadochi War, became widespread, and the cities became prey that changed hands according to the changing fortunes of the Macedonian leaders.

But from 285 the scene changed again quite abruptly. The successive deaths of Cassander, Lysimachus and Pyrrhus, and the defeat of Demetrius Poliorcetes by Seleucus of Syria, left the ancient kingdom of Macedonia without a monarch, embroiled in a civil war, and allowed Greece to free itself from military pressure. In 273 Antigonos Gonatas, son of Demetrius, regained final control of the kingdom for his family, the Antigonid Dynasty, heirs of Alexander's general Antigonos the one-eyed, but by then the germ of the modern Achaean League had already appeared. In 280, four cities, Patrae, Dyme, Tritaea

and Pherae, located in the northwest corner of the Peloponnese, had federated into a unified state. Under the common advocacy of the temple of Zeus Hamarius, on Mount Panachaicus, the new federation was based on common citizenship, equal rights among the cities, the rejection of tyrants and Macedonians, and the maintenance of governments that respected basic freedoms.

The cities elected two generals and a secretary in strict turn, who led an army and a common treasury together with a council of ten members, the *damiurges*, appointed by rotation among the different cities, with government functions in federal affairs. A general assembly, the *boule*, open to all proprietors over thirty years of age, was the depository of the sovereignty of the federation, but it met only twice a year, in spring and autumn, and was controlled in its legislative action by the magistrates, who were the only ones who could submit motions to vote. There was another assembly, *synodos*, composed of delegates sent by each city to deal with daily government matters, which met several times a year. It was a truly representative assembly. For specific or urgent matters, cities could send their own leaders to another type of assembly, the *synkletos*, but this only had the capacity to decide on the matter for which it was convened, and was subject to the corroboration of the general assembly. It was, therefore, a democratic administration, but with close control by the aristocracy of the different cities, in accordance with the principle of mixed sovereignty defended by Aristotle.

Originally, the Achaean League was only a small regional association, which reminds the formation of the Benelux in 1944, the confederation of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg in the midst of the storms of the Second World War, but its constitution was flexible enough to make it attractive to the small towns in the surrounding area, for its respect for local laws, strict equality among its members and the maintenance of oligarchic regimes, tempting charm for the aristocracies of the Peloponnesian cities, decimated by decades

of internal confrontations and wars. The League represented the possibility of rebuilding an institutional structure that would enable them to break the vicious circle of tyrannies and revolutions and their foreseeable consequences in the form of internal confrontations and mass exile. Soon the neighboring cities joined the small federation.

In 275 Aegium expelled its Macedonian garrison and applied for membership, quickly taking over the role of capital of the federation. Shortly afterwards it was Bura who joined the union. Its tyrant, supported by Macedonia, was deposed and killed by Margos of Keryneia, an exile. Margos was the first known leader of the Achaean League, although we know practically nothing about his political actions, apart from his fight against the tyrannical regimes and the Macedonians. The tyrant of Keryneia herself, Iseas, under strong pressure from the League, abdicated at that time and united his city to the federation in exchange for maintaining his civic leadership. Around the same time, other cities entered, such as Leontio, Pellene and Aegae, all from the northern part of the Peloponnese.

The expansion of the League was part of the conflict between Egypt and Macedonia over control of Greece. Ptolemy II of Egypt actively supported, especially with large amounts of money, the "democratic" parties against the tyrants supported by Macedonia. The Achaean League was, in the end, a triumph for Egypt, which thus gained a powerful foothold in western Greece. In 268 Ptolemy II supported the formation of a great alliance of Greek cities against Macedonia, led by Chremonides of Athens, in which the League was involved. The Chremonídes war began in 266. The great advantage of Antigonos II Gonatas, the Macedonian king, was the control of the Acrocorinth, which allowed it to keep Athens separate from its Peloponnesian allies. In 265 he defeated the Spartans against Corinth, and the Peloponnesian coalition, of which the Achaean League was a part, was dissolved. The blockade of Athens began, which had to be surrendered in 262. The Macedonian

position in Greece had been strengthened. In 255 Ptolemy recognized in a treaty the predominance of Macedonia in Greece.

It cannot be by mere chance that, precisely at that time, in 256, the Achaeans reformed their constitution, appointing a sole general, the strategos, instead of two, as they had done until then. This strategos was now elected by the general assembly held every year in the spring. His term of office lasted one year, and could not be renewed the following year, although it could be renewed year after. The first one elected was Margos of Cerynia. There is no doubt that the defeat of Egypt caused great alarm. Until then, with his economic and diplomatic support, Ptolemy II had been a fundamental support of the cause of Greek cities. Their withdrawal put the League in a state of emergency, which explains the creation of a personal command assigned to its most charismatic leader. From then on, the figure of the chief general was maintained until the last days of the federation, which seems to indicate a successful resolution of the crisis.

In fact, it was an unexpected event that relieved the predicament of Peloponnese, and therefore the anguish of the Achaean League. In 253 the Macedonian governor of the fortress of Acrocorinth rebelled against Antigonus II at the suggestion of Ptolemy II, who was unwilling to surrender definitively. Macedonia passage to the Peloponnese was again blocked. The League had survived a serious crisis, and the tyrants of the cities in the area, hitherto supported by Macedonia, were once again left to their fate. It was precisely at that time that Aratus of Sicyon, who rose to power in 251 after overthrowing the tyrant of his city, as we saw in the previous chapter, applied for membership in the Aquea League.

The League was at that time a weak federation of small cities, without a great role in the politics of the time, and had been created on ethnic and political bases to which Sicyon, of Doric origin, was alien. Perhaps the only contemporary parallel

we can find to Sicyon incorporation into the Achaean federation is the bizarre Franco-British union that, in May 1940, Winston Churchill raised. As then, a seemingly irresistible external threat, Macedonian supremacy in the 3rd century BC, the threat of Hitler's Germany in middle 20th century, prompted a political leader to apply desperate solutions. The difference is that in 1940 the French refusal condemned the attempt of British premier to be nothing more than a distant antecedent of the United Kingdom entry into the European Common Market. In 251 BC, the entry of Sición into the Achaean League would mark the history of the Peloponnese, and perhaps of Greece, in the next hundred years.

In his biography of Aratus, Plutarch does not give us any indication or clue as to the causes of his decision. Polybius, closer to the events, points out that Aratus *"... had become a passionate supporter of the institutions of the Achaean League from the very beginning."* These were based, according to Polybius himself, on the struggle against tyranny:

The policy of the Achaeans was always the same: to keep equal rights and freedom of expression among them, and to fight and fight tirelessly against those who, for themselves or through tyrants, wanted to enslave their cities... the freedom and harmony among the Greeks were the only reward they asked for their efforts, which they always made available to their friends. Polybius. 2.42

Leaving aside the enthusiasm of Polybius, who we recall was a magistrate in the Aquea League in the 2nd century BC, it may seem that Aratus' decision was due more to ideological and political philosophical reasons than to political opportunity. The thought of constituting a great national political framework for the Greek polis, capable of ensuring internal order and enabling them to resist the pressures of the great Hellenistic monarchies, had been developing since the fourth century BC, the idea of a movement for the integration of Greek cities was in the air. Great figures, especially Athenians, had advocated the

establishment of a great Panhellenic union under the leadership of Athens during the fourth century BC. Aratus grew up in this cosmopolitan environment, in contact with exiles from all over the Peloponnese, so it is very credible that from his youth the idea of collaborating in the creation of a federation of Greek cities was part of his political fantasies.

But ideological aspects cannot hide the contemporary strategic-political situation. A key figure in Aratus' decision was Ptolemy II of Egypt, who always maintained an interest in opposing the expansion of the Macedonian kingdom. Plutarch informs us that Aratus received twenty-five talents of silver from the king after Sicyon entry into the League in 251. Shortly afterwards Aratus travelled to Egypt, where obtained the necessary economic resources to mitigate the city's internal conflicts. The assets, one hundred and fifty talents, were distributed among the citizens who were economically disadvantaged by the return of the exiles and the forced return of their former properties. Aratus thus secured a dominant position within his city, and became, because of his social and economic prestige, his success in defusing the internal crisis, and his support abroad, the undisputed leader of Sición.

The political and diplomatic connection of the alliance with Egypt and the Sicyon joining into the Achaean League is evident. Around 246, Ptolemy III Evergetes, the new king of Egypt, was named *strategos* of the Achaean League, an honorary appointment of no real value but very significant of the alliance between the Achaeans and the Egyptian court, to which we referred earlier. In this way, Aratus achieved an important external support, from Egypt and Achaia, against the presumed Macedonian reaction, while at the same time eliminating any internal dissent that might serve as a support or excuse for a Macedonian intervention in Sicyon.

In the face of this Antigonos Gonatas tried to open ways of approaching Aratus, because Sicyon had been, until then, a bastion of the Macedonian influence in the area. It is possible

that these contacts had some fruit, since Plutarch puts on Antigonus's lips a burning eulogy of Aratus:

... before Aratus looked at me with indifference, and putting his hopes far away he sought Egyptian wealth. But now, after seeing Egypt with his own eyes, he has moved unconditionally to our side. I therefore take him under my protection, with the idea of using him for everything, and I wish you to treat him as a friend. Plutarch, Aratus 15

It is obvious that Aratus, confronted with the agitated diplomacy of the time, caught between powerful rival kingdoms, was playing several cards, approaching Macedonia without losing sight of the collaboration with Egypt. He was waiting for his chance, and with his city's membership in the Achaean League counted on getting the resources to act independently. The economic and demographic power of Sicyon, and its prestige as a large regional urban centre, quickly gave it a predominant position among the small and provincial cities that had been part of the federation until then. The time would soon come to use that growing strength to their advantage.

3.

THE EXPANSION OF THE LEAGUE

In 245, at the age of 26, Aratus was appointed strategos of the Achaean League. Under his leadership, the Federation soon embarked on a policy of territorial expansion that confronted it, firstly with the Macedonians and, later, with the rivalry of other Greek states. This was only the logical consequence of applying the strategic and political ideas of a large city like Sición, whose interests and objectives went far beyond the limited county horizon of the small cities that made up the federation in the middle of the third century BC. Until his generalate, according to Plutarch, Aratus remained faithful to the neutrality policy of the original League, but now, after reaching the highest level of magistracy, his ambition for power and his desire for political triumph pushed the confederation to participate in the great international conflicts of the time.

Aratus' first command was mediocre. During that year, it established an alliance with the Boeotians, threatened by the Aetolian League. Boeotia had tried to create its own league since the 4th century B.C., but suffered bitterly from its

exposed geographical position, which brought it within the reach of Macedonian reprisals. Thebes, its capital, was first occupied by Philip II, and later destroyed by Alexander the Great, and finally subdued by Antipater at the end of the 4th century BC. When Antigonus Gonatas lost Corinth, in 253, the Boeotians had the option to recover, and tried to rebuild their confederation. By allying with the Achaeans they hoped to be able to consolidate their independence, and slow down the expansion of the Aetolian federation, which since its victory over the Celts in 279 was becoming the dominant power in central Greece.

However, at the key moment, when the Aetolians attacked the Boeotian territory, the Achaean forces transported by sea across the Gulf of Corinth were delayed, entertained in the looting of the Aetolian coast. His absence at the key moment caused the complete defeat of the Boeotians in the battle of Coronea. Even more serious was the reconquest of Corinth by Antigonus Gonatas that same year 246. The way seemed open for Macedonian intervention in the Peloponnese.

The extreme danger was conjured up almost by chance, as Aratus, re-elected strategos in 243, achieved a spectacular and unexpected success. Some Syrian mercenaries from the new Macedonian garrison of Acrocorinth, the impregnable fortress that dominated Corinth and controlled the passage between central Greece and the Peloponnese, contacted him, providing information on the defenses. Aratus immediately organized and led a spectacular coup. With a group of selected troops, he surreptitiously entered the fortress at night, jumping over an accessible and poorly guarded stretch of the wall for the abruptness of the terrain. The occupation of the fortress, taken completely by surprise, allowed, when the morning arrived, an easy conquest of the city of Corinth, located at the foot. With Corinth firmly in the hands of the Achaeans, not only did the Macedonians once again see the Peloponnesians' path closed, but the Achaean League gained a dominant position throughout the region, no less than the advantage of being able to add one

of the most important Greek cities to the federation.

Because the Isthmus, which forms a barrier between the two seas, joins and connects our continent in that place; but the Acrocorinth, elevated mountain that rises from the middle of Greece, when a garrison is put to it, cuts the Isthmus to the communication, the commerce, the expeditions and all negotiation by land and by sea for the whole country, making the only owner of all this to the one who commands there, and with his garrison occupies the fortress. So it seems that not by game, but very truly, Philip the Younger called the city of Corinth "shackles of Greece. Plutarch, Aratus 16

Suddenly, without anyone having foreseen it, the League became the dominant power in the Peloponnese. He went on to control the two Corinthians ports, Cenchreae and Lechaeum, and acquired an important navy of twenty-five warships. This gave Arato the impetus he needed to initiate a policy of vigorous expansion of the Achaean League. As a Greek patriot he always had in mind the goal of expelling Macedonians from Greece and, like many other Hellenes, he understood that this would only be possible if the Greek cities left their differences behind and gathered in a confederation. Hence the importance of their own membership in the Achaean League. Aratus saw in the League the nucleus in which the rest of the Hellenic cities could gradually come together and join the forces that would allow them to confront the great Macedonian kingdoms. Aratus thought, after the conquest of Corinth, that this moment had arrived and, above all, that he himself could be the leader of this new unified Greece.

He immediately set to work. In the same year the city of Megara, hitherto an ally of Macedonia was admitted to the confederation. Then Troezen and Epidaurus did it. Antigonus of Macedonia, considering himself betrayed by Aratus, sought the support of the Aetolian to recover the lost position, but Aratus was supported by Sparta and Ptolemy III of Egypt. In 242, an Aetolian invasion that crossed the Isthmus and entered the

Peloponnese, was totally defeated in Pallene by a coalition of Achaeans and Spartans. In 241 Antigone acknowledged his defeat and signed peace with the League. After his triumph, Aratus was definitively recognized as the undisputed leader of the Achaean League.

His power among the Achaeans was so great that, since he was not allowed to be a general every year, he was chosen in alternate years, but in reality and in people opinion he was on and on in the command, because all saw that neither wealth, nor glory, nor friendship with kings, nor the particular good of his city, in short, that nothing mattered more to him to than rise and prosperity of the League of Achaeans.... Plutarch, Aratus 24

The death of Antigonus II Gonatas of Macedonia in 239 gave rise to a new inversion of the alliances. The new king, Demetrius II, resumed the war with the Achaeans. Aratus reacted with a rapprochement with the Aetolians, his former enemies, which feared that Macedonia, with its new sovereign, would regain its former position of hegemony in central Greece. Thanks to the strength of the Aetolians, the Macedonians were kept out of the Peloponnese, and Arato was able to continue its objectives of expansion, centred on three large cities: Athens, Argos and Megalopolis.

Aratus attempts on Athens began immediately after the death of Antigonus Gonatas. The Achaeans made several incursions into Attica, but encountered resistance from the Macedonian garrison in Piraeus, and with a manifest disdain for the Athenian people themselves. After its defeat at the hands of Philip II in 338, Athens languished between the pressure of the Macedonian kingdoms and the memories of its glorious past. Respected for its cultural importance, it became politically a target of the ambition of all the powers of the time. Aratus was no exception.

Over the next five years, the Achaeans undertook several attempts to expel the Macedonian garrison established in

Piraeus, but failed to do so. Several times Aratus showed up at the walls of Athens, but the Athenians themselves, who considered him a mere adventurer, unworthy of the past of the most illustrious city in Greece, refused to open the gates or support him against the Macedonians. For Aratus, the city was unquestionably a symbol. He sought the confederation of all Greek cities, and to control the most prestigious would give him and the Achaean League a formidable reputation. But finally he had to abandon his hopes after being defeated by the Macedonians in 234, and resigned himself, to his regret, to accept the Athenians' refusal to be integrated into the federation.

Argos was a different matter. After being the main political centre of the Peloponnese in the archaic era, it entered, after its defeat by Sparta in the 6th century BC, and the mistake of choosing the Persian side during the Second Persian Invasion of Greece of the 5th century BC, into a long period of isolation, obstinately closed into on itself. From the end of the 4th century B.C. the city was dominated by a succession of tyrants, supported and sustained from Macedonia, whose royal dynasty was considered itself native from Argos, and always gave their alliance great importance. After the fall of Acrocorinth in 243, it became the main Macedonian stronghold in the Peloponnese.

Aratus, who remembered well his time in exile in Argos, and whose own city, Sicyon, was bordering on Argive territory, was certainly almost personally interested in adding the city to the Achaean League. Since he came to power in the federation, he encouraged strong pressure on the Argives tyrants, either by attacking the city or by holding conspiracies and ambushes against them. By 243, coinciding with the capture of the Acrocorinth, he organized a coup d'etat against the tyrant of Argos, Aristomachus, who failed because of internal confrontations between the conspirators. Aristomachus was later murdered by his own slaves, perhaps in 242 or 241, which prompted Aratus to organize a quick operation to take over the city, only to find that the power had been occupied by another

tyrant, Aristippus, and that the citizens of Argos showed no interest in rebelling, as he had hoped because of his contacts in the interior of the city. Aristippus created an authoritarian regime, supported by Macedonia and a mercenary garrison paid for with the money of Antigonus Gonatas and Demetrius II, which prevented any extension of the Achaean federation in the Eastern Peloponnese.

Aratus tried by all means to overthrow Aristippus and incorporate his city into the League, attacking his territory on several occasions. On one occasion, he even led a personal assault on the city, and stayed a whole day fighting over the walls of Argos, until, wounded, had to give up the attempt because of the lack of support among the Argives citizens. Later on he managed to conquer the city of Cleonae, in Argive territory, which allowed him to make a propaganda coup, by organizing the prestigious Nemean athletic games, in which he undoubtedly participated in his youth, in the conquered Cleonae, opposing them to those celebrated by Aristippus in neighboring Nemea, a way of claiming Achaean dominion over Argos, being those sports competitions, known by all Greeks, the main event of the city.

Towards 336 Aratus was finally able to eliminate Aristippus. He deceived him by faking an expedition beyond the Isthmus of Corinth, and when the tyrant of Argos mobilized his forces to recover Cleonae, Aratus moved his troops back into the city at night, and surprised the Argive campament with an attack at dawn. Aristippus died in the retreat and his army disbanded. But when Aratus advanced to Argos, confident of finally taking control of his government, found that power in the city had been taken over by Aristomachus the Younger, the son of the tyrant overthrown by Aristippus. Disappointed, Aratus then gave up and began to focus his ambitions on Megalopolis.

Megalopolis was a modern city for ancient Greek standards. It was founded in 370 by Epaminondas of Thebes, with the intention of creating a rival to Sparta in Arcadia. This region had

until then remained as a rural area, dominated by the Spartans. By establishing a large urban center and unifying territory population, Epaminondas raised a permanent threat to the Spartans. During the following decades the new city found itself in difficulties, due to the continuing enmity with Sparta. In fact, the confrontation ended up becoming the great rivalry of the Peloponnese, accentuated by the segregation of a part of the Arcadia, led by Mantinea, with Spartan support. Megalopolis sought foreign assistance, finding it in Macedonia, whose sovereigns soon became protectors of the city, as a way of stopping any possible Spartan expansion. This rivalry, which would continue for centuries, is reminiscent of the rivalry established between France and Germany after German unification in 1870 and the Franco-Prussian War, with Sparta playing the role of Germany, and Mantinea representing the position of Alsace-Lorraine. Soon an obsessed Megalopolis, like France after 1871, would feel the need to seek the chance for a rematch.

In 235 the city was under the control of the tyrant Lydiadas, supported by the Macedonian court. After the capture of Corinth by the Achaeans, discovered himself very exposed, as he could not count on the military assistance of the Macedonians. Aratus then decided to try to incorporate the city into the Achaean League, but chastened with his failures in Argos, he preferred to initiate direct negotiations with the Megapolitan tyrant, with the offer to share the political direction of the Achaean League in exchange for Megalopolis membership into the federation. Lydiadas, beset by the Spartan threat, and pushed by Egypt's active diplomacy, always interested in weakening Macedonian position, agreed to the deal in 234, and was immediately elected federal strategos of the Achaean League, alternating with Arato from that moment on in office. It was without doubt Aratus' greatest political triumph. A contemporary equivalent would be the Franco-British Entente, which from the beginning of the 20th century tried to slow down German expansion in Europe.

The incorporation of Megalopolis into the Achaean League dragged a large part of Arcadia, and allowed the federation to extend from its original bases on the coast of the Gulf of Corinth to the central Peloponnese, in addition to joining all the demographic and military strength of a large city. On the other hand, Lydiades' decision pointed to a very attractive path for other Peloponnesian tyrants. It was actually very timely. In early 229 King Demetrius II of Macedonia died suddenly, leaving his son Philip, only seven years old, as heir. The regency was taken over by Antigonus Doson, a cousin of Demetrius, but all Greece rightly assumed a period of Macedonian weakness, focused on the problems of succession. The tyrants who survived in the Peloponnese ceased to count on Macedonian assistance, and saw in the example of Lydiades of Megalopolis a graceful way of facing up to their predictable difficulties. An active Achaean diplomacy, led by Aratus and supported with Egypt's bribes, did the rest.

The tyrants, therefore, gave in, and let themselves be convinced to give up their tyrannies, to liberate their cities and to join the Achaean Confederation. While Demetrius was still alive, Lydiades of Megalopolis, foreseeing the future, prudently and realistically abandoned tyranny on its own initiative and joined the League. Aristomachus, tyrant of Argos, Xenon of Hermione and Cleonymus of Phlius then also deposed their tyrannies and joined the Achaean democracy. Plutarch, Arato

In the case of Argos, serious conflicts arose, very illustrative of what the internal politics of the League would be like from then on. Lydiades of Megalopolis, who was the federal strategos at the beginning of 229, had a serious conflict with Aratus of Sicyon. Who would get to win the victory of leading the entry into the League of a city as important as Argos? This would undoubtedly cause major changes in the political balance of the federation. Aratus, unwilling to let the merit of a plan he had worked on for more than a decade slip out of his hands, came before the federal assembly in Aegium and successfully defended a motion against the incorporation of Argos, which

earned him the harsh criticism of the dismissed Lydiades, who had personally led the negotiations with Aristomachus. Aratus responded by running his own candidacy for the office of strategos, an election he won without difficulty. Immediately he called Aristomachus, and after giving him fifty talents of silver, he presented to the assembly a new motion to accept Argos into the federation. The following year, he supported with all his prestige the candidacy of Aristomachus of Argos to the office of strategos of 228, election in which the argive obtained a great majority, displacing Lydiades.

Aratus continued to be, despite the entry of new cities into the federation, the mayor leader of the League, while at the same time achieving a certain ascendancy over the argive population, something especially important if we think of the changes in the electoral balance, until then firmly dominated by Aratus and his party, caused the entry into the Achaean League of cities and territories so important demographically. Moreover, Athens, faced with the opportunity presented by the death of Demetrius, requested Aratus' help in expelling the Macedonian garrison from Piraeus, which allowed it to add the island of Aegina to the League, as well as to establish friendly relations with the Athenians. Aratus, after more than twenty years of struggle, and at the age of 43, saw his personal ambition fulfilled and had put himself on a par with the great Greek politicians of the classical era.

4.

SIGNALS FROM THE WEST

The moment of Aratus' political triumph coincided with the first serious contacts of continental Greece with Rome. The main Italian state was obviously not unknown to the Greeks. In fact, there was a collective awareness in Greece that Rome had originally been a Greek colony, " Barbarised " by its contacts with the indigenous Latin and Etruscan population, in the same way that in mid-nineteenth century Europe the United States was seen as a society of European emigrants, whose " European civilisation " had been transformed by being transplanted to another continent. Pyrrhus' defeat by the Romans in 275, with the subsequent Roman rule over the Greek cities of the southern Italian peninsula, was the first reliable news that a great barbarian power was being formed in the far west.

An obvious modern parallel can be drawn with the development of the USA since the end of the 18th century, the constitution of a powerful and expansive Republic, seen from Europe as a strange society, primitive and modern, rural and industrial at the same time. We know little about the Greek

vision of Rome at the middle 3rd century BC. It does not seem, however, that the Pyrrhic War aroused any special interest among the Greeks, if we consider that Greece was, at that time, involved in serious conflicts, derived from the final stages of the war of the Diadochi, or from the arrival of Celtic tribes in central Greece. Only a few Greek states, such as Egypt or Rhodes, which were always interested in trade and already knew the active Italics merchants, sent embassies to make contact with the new power.

The first Punic War, between 264 and 241, coincided with the early years of Aratus of Sicyon political career. We can compare the consequences of this great conflict in Ancient History with the American expansion to the West, and its development as a great continental state at the expense of Mexico and the Indian tribes, and above all with the Civil War, which crystallized the modern political model of the American republic. The rise of Rome aroused more interest in the Hellenic world. The victory over Carthage gave Rome the dominion of a Greek territory as important as Sicily, an ancient equivalent to Texas or California, where only the Greek city of Syracuse maintained its independence. On the other hand, the volume of military resources used by the Romans and Carthaginians was astonishing to Greece.

In this war the Romans lost almost seven hundred quinqueremes.... and the Carthaginians lost about five hundred, so that the admirers of the navies and naval battles of Antigonus, Ptolemy and Demetrius, when they know these numbers, it is natural that they should be astonished at the magnitude of these military actions. Polybius, 1. 63

Despite this, there is no particular anxiety. Like 19th century Europeans, who tended to see in the United States little more than a country of farmers, miners and industrial adventurers, despite battles like Gettysburg, which rivaled the Napoleonic ones in terms of volume and resources, few Greeks were more than curious about events in the West. Rome, like

the United States in the 19th century, was conspicuous by its power, wealth and abundance, but it was seen from Greece as a second-rate power, without any real protagonism in the great Greek diplomacy of the 3rd century BC. The case of Spain, where public opinion remained convinced almost until the end of the 1898 war of the inferiority of the United States as an upstart power in the face of the historical glory of the former Spanish empire, is illustrative of this state of affairs in many parts of Europe. A century after the First Punic War, when Rome had already achieved dominance in Greece, Polybius still seems surprised that no one in Greece had paid due attention to the First Punic War:

*If these states that fought over world sovereignty were familiar and known to us, it would not be necessary, of course, for us to write down the previous events now, and to describe the purpose or the power with which they took and performed such great and important actions. But since most Greeks are unaware of the power that Romans and Carthaginians once had, and ignore their feats, we have thought it indispensable to write this book...*Polybius 1. 2

We have no news that the Greeks of the middle 3rd century BC were particularly curious about Rome, although Italian traders were increasingly in contact with Egypt and the Aegean, and were gradually becoming common in the eastern ports, as had always been the Greeks of southern Italy, under the Roman protectorate since the middle of the 3rd century BC. The Romans did not show much interest in the Greek world either, although they did have some respect for such an important cultural metropolis, which is evident, for example, in the embassies sent by the Romans to the main Greek sanctuaries since the fourth century BC. The direct contact between continental Greeks and Romans was therefore, and to a certain extent, casual.

In 230, in the course of the war between Demetrius II of Macedonia and the Aetolian League, allied with the Achaean

federation as we saw in the previous chapter, the Macedonian king persuaded the king of Illyria, Agron, to attack the aetolians. The Illyrians, aggressive pirates, looted the coast of Epirus and assaulted several cities with mixed fortunes. These actions provoked protests in Rome from Italian and Greek merchants, who were sailing eastwards. The Roman Senate immediately sent ambassadors to Queen Teuta (Agron died during the parties celebrating the victories), but she, as Spain did with American diplomat requests in 1898 on Cuba, rejected the demands of the end of the incursions of the Illyrian fleets and expelled the Roman ambassadors.

The following spring, in 229, while Aratus and Lydiades disputed the prestige of leading Argos' entry into the Achaean League, the Illyrians resumed their expeditions, besieging the Greek cities of Epidamnus, Apollonia and Corcyra. The Corcyreans asked for the help of the Aetolians and Achaeans, who shipped an fleet, ten Achaeans warships and seven Etholians, under the command of Margos of Cerynia, perhaps the son of that Margos who was the protagonist in the struggles in which the Achaean League had been formed fifty years earlier. The combined fleet fought against the Illyrians alongside Corcyra, and was totally defeated, with the loss of five warships, and the death of its admiral, Margos. Corcyreans surrendered immediately afterwards, accepting an Illyrian garrison under the command of Demetrius of Pharos, a Greek adventurer in the service of Queen Teuta.

But the last word had not been said. While the victorious Illyrian fleet was retreating to the north, an enormous Roman fleet of two hundred quinqueremes appeared unexpectedly in front of Corcira, under the command of Consul Fulvio, with the express order of the Senate to avenge the affront to the ambassadors inferred the previous year. The Roman intervention and the volume of the forces employed, beyond all expectations and Hellenistic military capacity, in a minor matter in a marginal area, had to surprise and astonish the Greeks. At such a display of power the Illyrian garrison of Corcyra

immediately surrendered, and Demetrius of Pharos hastily put himself at the service of the Romans. The fleet then sailed to Apollonia, and then to Epidamno, where it found the Illyrian fleet supporting the siege of the city. The Illyrians hastened north. At that time the other consul, Postumius, arrived in Apollonia, commanding two full legions, accompanied by an equivalent force of Italic allies. Navy and Army advanced northward, causing the total disbanding of the Illyrians. The following year Teuta asked for peace. Like Spain in 1898, she unconditionally accepted all the Roman demands: to liberate the Greek cities in the coast, to withdraw to the interior of Illyria, and to renounce future incursions by sea south of the port of Lissus. Epidamno, Apollonia and Corcyra all asked for the protection of Rome, and were accepted as allied cities, under the same conditions as the Greek cities of Italy and Sicily.

That same year, Consul Postumius withdrew the troops, and sent ambassadors to the Aetolians and Achaeans to give them explanations. The talks were courteous, and the Greeks, too concerned about their own internal disputes and the war with Sparta, as we shall see in the following chapter, accepted without much reluctance what Rome had established in the region, which for them was a distant corner in which they had no special interest. On the Roman side there seemed to be a certain care not to do anything that might appear provocative in the eyes of the Greeks, no doubt because they had the firm intention of not crossing the Adriatic or becoming entangled in Greek conflicts. In fact, all troops were withdrawn, although Epidamno, Corcyra and Apollonia became possible bridgeheads for a hypothetical future intervention on that side of the Adriatic. On the part of the Achaeans and Aetolians, the relief for the defeat and neutralization of the Illyrians, which freed them from a very dangerous enemy, was outspoken. There was any sign of any special anxiety or fear of Roman action.

In fact, if anyone could be concerned, it would be Macedonia, the traditional enemy of Achaeans and Aetolians. Macedonia was the power that had pushed the Illyrians on their

raids, and they could not fail to see Rome as a future rival for hegemony in the Adriatic coast. The Roman withdrawal after the intervention indicates, however, the absence of a direct imperialist motive in its action. Rather, it would be a matter of sending a message to the Greek world, and especially to Macedonia, the main state of continental Greece, and the only one capable of becoming a rival, making it clear that Rome would not allow any adventure in Italy like that of Pyrrhus fifty years earlier. Any vagaries in that regard would be discouraged by the existence of a Roman hinterland on the east coast of the Otranto Canal. The interventions of the United States in Cuba, Panama, Mexico and Morocco in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, together with the expansion of its navy in the early 20th century, would be good parallels to this policy. That would explain the volume of forces mobilized by Rome, disproportionate to the resistance capacity of the Illyrians.

In any case, Rome was invited to participate in the Isthmus athletic games in Corinth, one of the centres of the Achaean League, an honour reserved until then only for the Greeks. Aratus, always attentive to every possibility, could have established more or less regular contacts with Rome, relying on the traditional Roman friendship with Egypt, a close ally of the Achaean federation. There is no doubt that the League, faced with growing difficulties in the Peloponnese, must have been interested in maintaining the friendship of the power that was growing in the West. But other matters closer at hand were focusing the Greeks' concerns and attention.

5.

TIMES OF DEFEAT

Between 251 and 230 Aratus of Sicyon had managed, in just two decades, to transform a small county league into the biggest power in the Peloponnese. In 229 he had created a genuine Greek confederation, with a clear option to bring together the majority of the most important cities of Greece, and to be able to challenge the great Hellenistic monarchies in the struggle for hegemony. The League continued to put pressure on the Peloponnesian cities, especially Sparta and its Arcadian allies, Tegea, Mantinea and Orchomenus. But in that bright present, shadows began to appear. The League was experiencing internal difficulties inherent in its fast growth. It was becoming increasingly clear that rapid expansion was causing serious problems in the apparent federal unity of the Achaeans. Many cities had joined the Achaean League for opportunistic reasons, according to their own local interests. The solidarity of the early days between the small cities of the northern Peloponnese was lost when the cultural and ethnic cohesion of the early days disappeared, with the entry into the

confederation of the large Doric cities, such as Sicyon, Argos, Megalopolis or Corinth. We already saw how Arato met up with serious rivals in Lydiades of Megalopolis or Aristomachus the Younger of Argos, who were unwilling to accept a subordinate position within the League's administration.

Secondly, Aratus, the undisputed leader of the League, began to demonstrate his limitations in his military leadership, which is essential when it comes to territorial expansion. In spite of the praises of Plutarch and Polybius, Aratus reveals himself to us as a mediocre general, without tactical or strategic ability, always on the lookout for sneak attacks, extravagant plans, and avatars of fortune. He remembers powerfully the role played by Churchill and his military misfortunes of the two World Wars in the military history of the 20th century. Although he had some great successes, such as in Sicyon, Mantinea, Cleonae or Acrocorinthus, all of them nightly surprise blows, Aratus also suffered great failures, such as the assaults on Piraeus, Argos, and his continuous defeats in the open field against Aetolians, Macedonians and Spartans. His great skill was the world of politics. It was the Aetolians and the Spartans, attracted diplomatically, who enabled him to resist Macedonia. The Achaean Army, on the the other hand, never reached an acceptable level of operability under his command.

Finally, Aratus' strategy undermined the democratic foundations and political stability of the Achaean League. He himself, as a member of an aristocratic family, supported the rule of the richest in all cities. He accepted tyrants like Aristomachus or Lydiades into the League, and the institutions of the federation quickly became the scene of the struggle between the leaders of each city for political office in the League, and control of the federal government. Although the Achaean citizens' assembly still controlled general politics, the citizens of each city voted according to local interests, dominated by the leaders and factions of each of them. Very soon resentments appeared because of the cornering of some of these characters. These problems quickly fester as hostilities

began with the historic capital of Lacedemonia, Sparta.

After her humiliating defeat to the Thebes in 371, Sparta lost its traditional control over the Peloponnese, but remained stubbornly isolated from the rest of the Greek world, confronted by all, including all-powerful Macedonia of Alexander the Great. Plunged into a deep crisis, it consciously remained isolated in the south of the Peloponnese, defending its glorious military traditions. However, preserving their unchanging customs soon aggravated their internal situation. Sparta maintained its rigid ethnically based social structure, in which only a minority of citizens, the Spartans, had full political rights. Successive wars, the fall of the birth rate, and debts, led to the loss of land ownership for many of them, and reduced the number of citizens with full rights to less than a thousand. Thus a situation of weakness and unrest social arose, exacerbated by the loss of Messenia, the traditional barn of the Spartan state, in the middle of the 4th century BC. A minority of wealthy citizens began to accumulate large estates, forming an aristocracy that abandoned the egalitarian Lacedemonian traditions, while the majority of the population was gradually reduced to proletarian status. The social consequences ended up being similar to those at the end of the First World War and in the early 1930s, when the foundations of a nation as solid and stable as Germany were blown up.

These social problems were not unique to Sparta, but it was there that they first arose in all their violence. In fact, the whole of Greece was plunging into an increasingly acute social and economic crisis. The traditional greek society, based on a body of big or small agricultural landowners who shared the rights of citizens, and who had a certain community of interests, began to crack when, from the end of the 6th century BC, currency became widespread as an economic instrument. The aristocracy and the wealthier citizens had access to the money, investing it in land, trade, crafts, slaves and luxury goods. Poor farmers, on the other hand, ended up in debt, the only way for them to access the monetary economy. Alexander

the Great's conquests aggravated the problem, since the influx of wealth from the East, which monopolized the richest, led to rapid inflation, which further indebted the poor citizens who, losing control of their plots of land or their small commercial or artisanal capital, were expanding an aggressive urban proletariat. Landowners were thus threatened by an increasingly unstoppable social movement whose programme was based on debt forgiveness and equal redistribution of land.

In the middle of the 3rd century B.C., in Sparta, the need for radical social reforms arose openly. But these concerns were ruthlessly blocked by the minority of wealthy citizens, who controlled the college of ephors. In 244 King Agis IV came to power and proposed the abolition of debts and the redistribution of land in equal lots, which would allow, with the incorporation of more citizens, to expand the ranks of the army.

... that debtors should be relieved of their debts, and that the land should be divided up, that which lay between the water-course at Pellene and Taygetus, Malea, and Sellasia, into forty-five hundred lots, and that which lay outside this into fifteen thousand; that this larger land should be apportioned among those of the Perioeci who were capable of bearing arms, and the smaller among the genuine Spartans; that the number of these Spartans should be filled up from the Perioeci and foreigners who had received the rearing of freemen and were, besides, of vigorous bodies and in the prime of life... Plutarch, Agis and Cleomenes, 8

These reforms were presented as a return to the traditional egalitarianism of Sparta, and as a way of recovering the military vigour of yesteryear. Then a fierce opposition broke out among the most powerful families, who blocked the Agis' law using their strength in the college of magistrates and the support of the other king, Leonidas, Agis' personal enemy. In 241, taking advantage of the absence of Agis, in campaign against the Macedonians in support of the Achaeans, the landlords carried out a coup d'état, deposed and murdered the king, and forced

his son into exile. The victory of the owners was, however, of short duration. In 237 King Leonidas, the most fervent opponent of the reforms, died. His young son, Cleomenes, came to the throne. Agis' widow, Agiatis, was forced to marry him, with unsuspected consequences.

For she was heir to the great estate of her father Gylippus, in youthful beauty she far surpassed the other women of Greece, and she had an excellent disposition. Therefore she begged most earnestly, we are told, that she should not be forced into this marriage, but after she was united to Cleomenes, though she hated Leonidas, to the young man himself she was a good and affectionate wife. And he, as soon as Agiatis was his, became passionately fond of her, and in a way sympathized with her devotion to the memory of Agis, so that he would often ask her about the career of Agis, and listen attentively as she told of the plans and purposes which Agis had formed. Plutarch, Agis and Cleomenes, 22

Cleomenes soon accepted justice and the need to implement Agis' radical social reform programme, and was soon ready to seize the moment to put it into practice. The main objective of Cleomenes was not only to create a new social order, but to restore an ancestral power of the lacedaemonian "lineage", overcoming social and economic differences, and establishing by force a political egalitarianism under his personal leadership, which would recover the venerable traditions of strict military discipline of the "Great Sparta" of the 6th and 5th centuries BC. Cleomenes took advantage of the existence of a deep social resentment in the Sparta of his time, to concentrate all power in his hands and launch a policy of territorial expansion that would return his city to hegemony in the Peloponnesian world. Conflicts with the Achaeans, increasingly fierce since 230, gave him the perfect excuse to develop that program.

The Achaean League, since Megalopolis and Argos joined to the federation, had been involved in the historical conflicts of

both cities had with Sparta, involving itself in the traditional hostility between Spartans, Megapolitans and Argives, such as the Franco-German rivalry of the inter-war period of the twentieth century and the revisionism against the Treaty of Versailles of the German nationalists were major causes that led to the outbreak of the Second World War in Europe. The struggle became inevitable in a short time. On the achaeian side, both Argos and Megalopolis, recently integrated into the Achaean League, were counting on taking advantage of the federation's forces to destroy their traditional enemy and regain control of the disputed regions, Mantinea for Megalopolis and Cynuria for Argos. Moreover, Aratus continued with his project to unify all of Greece, and the forced integration of Sparta, one of the most prestigious cities, together with the small Arcadian cities it supported, would be a great success. Cleomenes, for his part, expected that a war situation would facilitate the execution of his plan to implement the revolutionary program of his predecessor, Agis.

Both sides therefore expected benefits from the confrontation. Open war soon became inevitable and began in 229. Cleomenes defeated Aratus, the Achaean strategos, during the summer, but in turn Aratus took Mantinea, Sparta's ally, again in a fortunate strike at night. The fight continued during the magistracy of Aristomachus of Argos in 228, with some advantage of the Spartans in the field, although without decisive victories. By then, Aratus was beginning to behave in an excessively cautious manner, which earned him widespread criticism from the Achaean public.

Overran [Cleomenes] the territory of Argos, whereupon the Achaeans marched out with twenty thousand foot-soldiers and a thousand horsemen under Aristomachus as general. Cleomenes met them at Pallantium and offered battle, but Aratus, in fear of this boldness, would not suffer his general to hazard the issue, and retired. For this he was reproached by the Achaeans, and jeered at and despised by the Lacedaemonians, who were less than five thousand strong. Plutarch, Agis and Cleomenes, 25

The causes of this withdrawal are confusing. It is possible that he feared that a success of Aristomachus would create an adversary too formidable in the political fight to control League's federal institutions. By the year 227 the Achaeans, in spite of the criticisms of the previous campaign, chose for the twelfth time Aratus as the strategos, confronted to the Lydiadas of Megalopolis, defeated for the third consecutive time, in a vote in which it seemed to be at stake who would have the honor of obtaining the merit of the definitive victory over Sparta. But the war would have an unexpected twist. As the season for military campaigns began, Cleomenes, from the front line, made a sudden advance against Sparta itself, and violently eliminated the college of ephors and the landlords' party, imposing the application, in its most radical form, of the Agis IV programme, while reintroducing the austere code of conduct of the ancient Spartans. Cleomenes thus became de facto tyrant of Sparta, controlling the city with the enthusiastic support of all those favored by the debt cancellations and the redistribution of property. Once secured his power, he armed the poorest citizens, returned to the battlefield and, during that summer, ruthlessly shattered Aratus' military prestige.

The Achaeans were worsted by Cleomenes while on the march near the Lycaeum and again in a pitched battle at a place in the territory of Megalopolis called Ladoceia, Lydiades falling here, and finally their whole force met with utter defeat at the Hecatombaeum in the territory of Dyme. Polybius, The Histories, 2. 51

Polybius, an admirer of Aratus, and always hostile to the Spartans, presents the facts in a concise and distant manner, but Plutarch is more explicit about the Achaean disaster of 227. He tells us that, after Clemens entered the territory of Megalopolis, Lydiades asked for Aratus' help. Aratus was always on the defensive, refusing to face the Spartans, as he had forced Aristomachus to do the year before. At last, before Ladoceia, the two armies clashed, but Aratus continued to refuse to engage in battle. Impatiently, Lydiades launched a

successful cavalry assault on his own, hoping that Aratus would follow him in the pursuit of the Spartans, but he remained impassive.

But his [Lydiades] ardour and ambition robbed him of discretion, and he was drawn on into places that were intricate and full of planted trees and broad trenches. Here Cleomenes attacked him and he fell, after a brilliant and most honourable combat at the gates of his native city. The rest of his men fled to their main line, threw the men-at-arms into confusion, and thus infected the whole army with their defeat. Aratus was severely blamed for this, being thought to have betrayed Lydiades; and when the Achaeans left the field in anger, they forced him to accompany them to Aegium. Here they held an assembly, and voted not to give him money and not to maintain mercenaries for him; if he wanted to wage war, he must provide the means himself. Plutarch, Aratus, 37

The misfortunes did not end there. Cleomenes regained Mantinea, and then penetrated the heart of the Achaean league and defeated the core of his Army along with Dime. Arato was definitely discredited and even thought about resigning from his post. He did not, but his generalate ended in absolute failure. In the May 226 elections he was removed from power. The young Cleomenes, victorious after his formidable victories last year, now looked like the politician of the future. From 226 onwards he began to invade the territory of the Achaeans, defeating them on several occasions. That summer, after unsuccessful peace talks in which Aratus sibilantly intervened to force his failure, Cleomenes launched a blitzkrieg against the Achaean League. He quickly took Pellene, in Achaia itself, and Pheneus, in Arcadia. Then Aristomachus of Argos, federal strategos only two years earlier, made a pact with Cleomenes and segregated his city from the League with all the Argolide, allying himself with the Spartans. Later, in 225, the citizens of Corinth and Phlius, losing the enthusiasm with which they entered the League, called Cleomenes and opened its doors to him, although the fortress of Acrocorinth remained in the hands of

the Achaean garrison, under the direct control of Aratus.

This spectacular breakthrough would not have been possible without a deep crisis within the Achaean League. On the one hand, military failures in a war that did not seem to pose any particular danger at the outset led to dissension, with the result that Aratus fell into disgrace, and the general lost of confidence in the federal idea, especially among the cities incorporated a few years earlier. Each city, looking out for its own interests and distrusting the allies, tried to face the difficulties by its own means. It is also clear that the Achaeans had underestimated the Spartan military tradition, reinforced by the incorporation into their army of the poorest citizens, and overestimated their own strength.

At the same time, a large part of the population of the League's cities was crying out in favour of the social reforms that Cleomenes had implemented in Sparta, especially in terms of the redistribution of land ownership and the remission of debts. Within the federation, thought was given to recognizing the authority of Cleomenes, thus unifying the Peloponnesian but under Spartan leadership, in a return to the ancient Peloponnesian League of the 5th century BC. At the end of 225 the situation of the League could be considered desperate, similar in part to that which the United Kingdom found itself in the summer of 1940 following the Nazi conquest of Western Europe. Faced with fierce internal dissension and a movement of disintegration, with Cleomenes occupied the heart of its territory, and with the Aetolian League, always ready to extend its dominion, ready to leap over the ruins that might remain. The Achaean League, only four years after reaching its maximum territorial expansion, seemed on the verge of dissolution and disappearing forever. However, Arato had not yet played all his cards.

6.

THE KING'S RETURN.

Arato de Sición, the natural leader of the Peloponnesian aristocracies, although displaced from the centers of the federal government here, could not in any way consent to Cleomenes of Sparta, with his revolutionary ideals of social reform, obtaining supremacy in the Peloponnese. His political experience made him understand from a very early moment, perhaps from the very beginning of the war, that the spartan king represented a popular energy that, if it overflowed, would flood all the pillars on which the political and social structure he himself had defended for decades was founded. It is quite possible that when he resisted, in 228 and 227, the desire of Aristomachus of Argos and Lydiades of Megalopolis to clash with the Spartans in open fields, he foresaw the disaster that could occur in the confrontation between the mediocre Achaean army and the Spartan regular army, a true nation in arms that the Greeks, accustomed to the use of mercenaries, had not known for a long time. The solution to the crisis had to be found outside the Achaean League. In fact, both Polybius and Plutarch

convey the idea that Aratus, in his search for a way out of the crisis caused by the Spartan king's victories, had begun talks with the king of Macedonia from the very beginning, probably after the tumultuous federal assembly of Aegium, in 227, which had disowned him as a strategos. Only Macedonia could deploy the necessary strength to contain the energies awakened by Cleomenes, backed also by the diplomatic and financial support of the King of Egypt, who was trying to return to the hard game of Greek rule.

The 225 catastrophe prompted Aratus to seek the most drastic solution. Informal talks with the traditional enemy, Macedonia, must become an effective partnership at any cost. After the death of Demetrius II in 229, just before the beginning of the war, Antigonos Doson had occupied the throne. During the first few years, the new Macedonian king showed a cautious attitude to the war in the Peloponnese, waiting for opportunities to arise, the same strategy of prudence that the Aetolians applied. Aratus, for his part, began to open up reserved channels of communication with him from his political retirement. He thought, no doubt, of the dangers that the revolution that Cleomenes had initiated in Sparta represented for his own social group. But also, and perhaps above all, in his own position as a disgraced political leader, needed a coup de fortune to return to the forefront. Aratus was not prepared to accept that his own position as political leader of the Peloponnese, his image as the renewer of Greek unity, should be "usurped" by someone he considered a young upstart.

The first steps had already been taken in 226, through Megalopolis, still under the impact of the disappearance of Lydiades. The city had been dramatically confronted with the real possibility of being occupied and absorbed by its traditional rival, Sparta. A request for help from the Megapolitans to Antigonos Doson seemed reasonable, given the long tradition of collaboration of its tyrans with Macedonia. A megapolitan embassy was approved by the Achaean assembly. But Aratus gave the ambassadors, led by Cercidas, his own reserved

instructions. Secrecy was vital, since Macedonians were rejected frontally throughout Greece as enemies of Greek freedom. In fact, Arato continued to present himself as Macedonia's rival until the end of his life. But as Winston Churchill would say before the British Parliament in the summer of 1941, "If Hitler invaded hell I would make at least a favorable reference to the devil in the House of Commons." Underhand, Arato showed Antigonus Doson the dangers of a Cleomenes victory, which would allow him to control the entire Peloponnese and, allied with the Aetolians and Egypt, to dispute hegemony to Macedonia throughout Greece. We can take Polybius, who no doubt used Arato's autobiography, now lost, as the voice of his opinions:

For it was perfectly evident to all that the Achaeans could not hold out against both adversaries, and it was still more easy for any person of intelligence to see that, [here no doubt Polybius refers to Aratus' views] if the Aetolians and Cleomenes were successful, they would surely not rest content and be satisfied with their advantage. The Aetolian schemes of territorial aggrandizement would never stop short of the boundaries of the Peloponnese or even those of Greece itself, while Cleomenes' personal ambition, and far-reaching projects, though for the present he aimed only at supremacy in the Peloponnese, would, on his attaining this, at once develop into a claim to be over-lord of all Hellas, a thing impossible without his first putting an end to the dominion of Macedon. They implored him then to look to the future and consider which was most in his interest... Polybius, The Histories, 2.49

The situation escalated in the spring of 224. Faced with the defection of Corinth, and with the rest of the federal territory threatened by the Spartan army, a weakened Achaean assembly asked Aratus to return to power. By then his conversations with Antigonus Doson were already publicly known. At the same time Aratus, who was in Sicyon, besieged by the Spartan army, received a proposal from Cleomenes to collaborate with each other to keep the Macedonians out of the

Peloponnese, the same proposal that Hitler presented to a weakened Churchill in June-July 1940 against the USSR. Cleomenes offered him to safeguard the Achaean League, reinforced by Sparta, and to secure his own future with an important economic offer, in exchange for accepting the Spartan king as strategos and leader of the federation. The origin of the offer was in the king of Egypt, Ptolemy III Euergetes, which had always supported Aratus and the League, but could not allow Macedonia to regain hegemony over the Peloponnese. Aratus did not hesitate. He would not tolerate the Achaean League, his dream, his work of decades, being taken away from him. Later Greek authors, such as Plutarch, were saddened by this decision.

This ruined the cause of Greece, at a time when she was still able in some way or other to recover from her grievous plight and escape Macedonian greed and insolence. For Aratus, whether it was through distrust and fear of Cleomenes, or because he envied the king his unlooked for success, and thought it a terrible thing after thirty and three years of leadership to have his own fame and power stripped from him by an upstart of a young man, and the authority taken over in a cause which he himself had built up and controlled for so long a time... Plutarch, Agis and Cleomenes, 38

Aratus quickly circumvented the Spartan blockade and presented himself to the Achaean federal assembly in Aegium with a proposal to offer the fortress of Acrocorinth to Macedonia in exchange for the alliance against Cleomenes. Antigonus Doson, for whom possession of Acrocorinth meant regaining a position of hegemony in Greece, hastened to confirm the agreement. In the summer, after eluding the aetolian blockade in Thermopylae, a large Macedonian army, led by the king, appeared in front of Corinth. Cleomenes entrenched himself there, ready to prevent him from entering the Peloponnese, which he did for some time, but soon a rebellion broke out in Argos, no doubt encouraged by the contacts that Aratus retained in the city and the traditional ascendancy of the

Macedonian royal court there. The Achaean troops, under the command of the strategos Timoxenos, took over the city and took Aristomachus prisoner, who was executed shortly afterwards amidst atrocious tortures.

The loss of Argos left Cleomenes isolated from his bases in Lacedemonia, and although he struggled to regain the city, finally he had to give up and withdraw to Sparta. All his conquests of the years 227-225 were immediately lost. Corinth rejoined the Achaean League, and Antigonos Doson occupied Acrocorinth, according to the agreement with Aratus. From that moment on, the Macedonian army and the Achaeans recovered the lost positions and blocked Cleomenes in Sparta. In 223, after being named achaeon strategos the king Antigonos, the Allies occupied Tegea and Orchomenus. Mantinea, accused of treason, was razed to the ground and its inhabitants sold into slavery.

It was thought also that the treatment of Mantinea by the Achaeans was not in accord with the Greek spirit. For after mastering that city with the aid of Antigonos, they put to death the leading and most noted citizens, and of the rest, some they sold into slavery, while others they sent off into Macedonia in chains, and made slaves of their wives and children, dividing a third of the money thus raised among themselves, and giving the remaining two-thirds to the Macedonians. Plutarch, Aratus, 45

Cleomenes, not finding enough help in Egypt, resorted to desperate measures, mobilizing the hilotes, the Spartan serfs, and violently attacked Megalopolis in the fall, delivering it to the plundering of its troops after not being able to reach an armistice with the megapolitans, entrenched with their families in the vicinity. Decades of rivalry and confrontation could not be erased. The decisive battle took place in 222. Antigonos advanced to Sparta and Cleomenes met him in Sellasia, near the city. The inevitable confrontation, where a young megapolitan named Filopemen stood out, ended with the

complete victory of the Macedonian phalanx. Cleomenes fled to Egypt, and Antigonus Doson entered Sparta without further resistance. The Spartan previous order was restored, the former exiled landlords were called, the supporters of Agis and Cleomenes persecuted, and social reforms revoked.

The end of the war meant, fundamentally, the recovery of the hegemony of Macedonia over the Peloponnese, in a manner similar to that in which the Soviet Union dominated most of Eastern Europe after the Second World War. With the regained control of the fortress of Acrocorinth, and obtained Orchomenus as a citadel, the Macedonians had opened the way to any point of the peninsula. Corinth also came under Macedonian influence, and was separated from the League, as was Megara, now isolated from the rest of the federation, which became part of the Boeotian confederation, under the protection of Macedonia.

The Macedonian king became the protector of the Achaean League, which gave him all kinds of honours and privileges, including the right to convene the federal assembly. The League, leaving aside the traditional policy of resistance to Macedonian hegemony, became a close ally of Antigono Dosón, which he consolidated by distributing large amounts of money among cities and political leaders. Decades later the king's liberality was still remembered. Macedonia also secured a broad coalition of allies throughout Greece, in a reissue of what had been the Corinthian league at the time of his grandfather Demetrius Poliercetes. Egypt, increasingly decadent after the death of Ptolemy III, and seriously threatened by the Seleucid kingdom of Syria, no longer had the capacity to fight for control of Greece.

In 222 Arato could have thought he had achieved a great victory by keeping the Achaean League unscathed after serious dangers. However, in the later Greek historiographic tradition voices are heard with a negative view of his performance during the previous decade:

And therefore men blame Aratus, because, when the ship of state was driving in a great surge and storm, he forsook the pilot's helm and left it to another, although it had been well, even if the people were unwilling, to remain at their head and save them; 4 and if he despaired of the government and power of the Achaeans, he ought to have yielded to Cleomenes, and not to have made Peloponnesus quite barbarous again under Macedonian garrisons, nor to have filled Acrocorinthus with Illyrian and Gallic arms, nor, in the case of p89 men whom he was always defeating in the fields of war and statesmanship and abusing in the pages of his Commentaries, to have made these men lords over the cities under the endearing name of allies. Plutarch, Aratus 38

Despite that acerbic criticism, Aratus' performance could hardly have been anything else. After 222 he wrote his memoirs, in which he tried to justify his actions in the war. Although that work has been lost, we can try to reconstruct its basic content through the texts of Polybius and Plutarch. In these memoirs he presented the Macedonian kings, always ready to extend their hegemony, as the great rivals against whom the process of Greek union was to be defended. Polybius, who follows Aratus' autobiography, stresses the same idea, allowing us to see what his justification was for explaining the anti-natural alliance with the Macedonians in 224. To this end, he used the actions of the Aetolian League as an excuse 'a posteriori' to explain his approach to Macedonia. He took advantage of the state of war that existed between the Achaeans and the Aetolians from 221 onwards, that is, right after the war with Cleomenes. He justified his contacts with the Aetolians as being guided by good faith, explaining his alliance with them in 230 as an attempt to form a Greek common front in the face of threatening Macedonian expansion. But on the next line he presents them as traitors, who were plotting with the Macedonian kings and Cleomenes of Sparta the destruction of the League.

The Aetolians, owing to that unprincipled passion for which

is natural to them, either out of envy or rather in the hope of partitioning the cities, as they had partitioned those of Acarnania with Alexander and had previously proposed to do regarding Achaëa with Antigonus Gonatas, went so far as to join hands with Antigonus Doson, then regent of Macedonia and guardian to Philip, who was still a child, and Cleomenes, king of Sparta. Polybus, The Histories, 2. 45

We can be almost certain that this view was absolutely false if we speak of the situation prior to 222. Let us not forget that the Aetolians never intervened directly, at any time, in the Cleomenean war, outside of the usual expeditions of looting of isolated aetolian gangs that the Greeks had known for decades. But Aratus no longer wrote for the contemporaries of the War of Cleomenes, but for the Achaeans who faced, since 220, in an all-out struggle, the Aetolians, and who could accept without hesitation any note of infamy for their enemies.

They supposed that if they could get the Lacedaemonians also to join them in their project, exciting first their animosity against the League, they could easily crush the Achaeans by attacking them at the proper time all at once and from all quarters. This indeed they would in all probability soon have done, but for the most important factor which they had overlooked in their plans. They never took into consideration that in this undertaking they would have Aratus as their opponent, a man capable of meeting any emergency. Consequently the result of their intrigues and unjust aggression was that not only did they entirely fail in their designs, but on the contrary consolidated the power of the League, and of Aratus who was then Strategos, as he most adroitly diverted and spoilt all their plans. Polybius, The Histories, 2. 45

Thus Aratus completes his argument: it was the aetolian traitors who were the real enemies, and his alliance with Macedonia could not be understood as the recognition of the hegemony of the Macedonian kings, but as a skilful manoeuvre to thwart the aetolian complots to destroy the Achaean League

and, by extension, the civilized Greece. These ideas were accepted without criticism by Polybius himself, but in the rest of Greece the opinion was different. This impression has been conveyed to us in Plutarch's work. For him, Aratus' actions were not guided by the interest of Greece, by the defence of his freedom, but by his own ambition for individual glory and prestige, refusing to accept the idea that another political leader, now Cleomenes of Sparta or formerly Lydiades of Megalopolis or Aristomachus of Argos.

Plutarch presents Aratus as a leader focused on his personal political agenda. A record of twenty years as the leader of the Achaeans and more than thirty years as the leader of his city makes it highly unlikely that he would even think of ceding his position to anyone, let alone anyone, to Cleomenes. Aratus was a representative of the aristocracy, and Cleomenes embodied a social revolution that the oligarchies of the Achaean cities were in no way willing to assume. Faced with the dilemma between preserving the autonomy of the Greeks and defending their economic and social position, they had no doubts, and their enthusiasm for the Macedonians' arrival showed this.

Finally, for Aratus, the alliance with Macedonia was nothing new. Its city, Sicyon, had close relations with Macedonia since the 4th century BC. He himself, when was only twenty years old who was plotting to return to his homeland, sought the necessary support in the Macedonian court. Despite decades of war, Macedonian kings, like the Egyptians, were, for Arato and many other aristocrats of the Peloponnese, a clear choice when economic or military support was needed to underpin the oligarchy's control over the cities. Perhaps Aratus, who had already had direct diplomatic contact with the Roman Republic since 228, might have thought of attracting it to Greek politics as a counterweight to Macedonia, just as the intervention of the United States in 1943-1947 prevented the expansion of Soviet rule in Central and Western Europe, but in 224 Roman isolationism with regard to Greek affairs was still total, and faced with the immediate danger represented by Cleomenes,

Aratus, as Churchill would have done with the Soviet Union in his day if he not been able to count on the American alliance, was forced to place himself in the hands of his old Macedonian rival. Macedonian hegemony over Greece thus seemed, at that time, solidly established, almost at the same level as that achieved by the kings of the fourth century B.C., when, unexpectedly, in 221, during a punitive campaign against some Illyrian tribes, Antigone Doson died. He was succeeded to the throne by his adopted son Philip V, the son of Demetrius II, who was only 17 years old. Macedonia seemed condemned to a new period of instability.

7.

RESISTANCE TO MACEDONIA

The year 222 Aratus, despite the bitter criticism for his alliance with Macedonia, had good reason to see his performance as a great triumph. He had restored the cohesion and stability of the Achaean League after the violent political and social tensions of the war with Cleomenes. The success of the federation seemed to demonstrate the benefits of submission to the Macedonian kings. Both Antigonus Doson and his successor, Philip V, showed special deference to the Achaean Federation, respecting its institutions and internal freedom. For the Achaeans, especially after the experiences with Cleomenes of Sparta, having the help of the main military power of Greece had to represent a very comforting feeling of security. At the same time, however, the seeds of new crises were sprouting. For much of the rest of Greece, submission to a renewed Macedonian empire was by no means a viable option for the future.

For many states and confederations, the propaganda of the Macedonians, who presented themselves as the protectors of

Greece's freedom, was nothing more than empty rhetoric, and they were not prepared to accept that this freedom should be subject to a power they considered foreign. Aetolians in particular, Macedonia's main rivals in central Greece, were particularly alarmed by the increase in Macedonian power. They had remained neutral throughout the Cleomenean War, waiting for events, and ready to make a pact with the victor if we believe in Polybius. But we have already seen many times his efforts to keep Macedonians out of Greece. The victory of Antigonos Doson in Sellasia had them worried sick. The obvious result was an active anti-Macedonian diplomacy since 221. Polybius, who always shows in his writings a tenacious hostility to the Aetolians, blames this activity on his taste for piracy and banditry.

The Aetolians had for long been dissatisfied with peace and with an outlay limited to their own resources, as they had been accustomed to live on their neighbours, and required abundance of funds, owing to that natural covetousness, enslaved by which they always led a life of greed and aggression, like beasts of prey, with no ties of friendship but regarding everyone as an enemy. Polybius, The Histories, 4.3

It should be noted, however, that the Aetolians also thought, from a national point of view, that the hegemony of Macedonia, their traditional enemy, threatened not only their confederation but also the independence of Greece. Their policy of neutrality, therefore, became more aggressive, and they tried to break the net of alliances woven by Antigonos Doson, assuming that at his death, his successor, Philip, a 17-year-old boy, would be unable to hold together the sometimes conflicting interests of his allies.

Hostilities began in 221 on the territory of Messenia, a reluctant Macedonian ally after Sparta's defeat in 222. The border of Messenia was harassed by aetolians gangs based in some small Peloponnesian towns on the west coast. The Achaean League, unwilling to allow the intervention of Aetolians

in the Peloponnese, and emboldened after its participation in the victory over Sparta, and in its alliance with Macedonia, gave Arato the task of preventing the attacks. His troops were defeated without difficulty by the Aetolians at Cafias, demonstrating once again the military weakness of Aratus and the Achaeans. Immediately Aetolians looting operations spread, crossing the Peloponnese and the bands withdrawing at the end of the summer through the Isthmus of Corinth.

That defeat substantially weakened Aratus' fragile leadership within the League. A diffuse movement of internal opposition to its political dominance began to be perceived, which is difficult to contextualize, but which could very well have originated in the small cities of the north, the founders of the League, tired of the conflicts to which they were dragged both by the international politics of Aratus and by the interests of cities such as Argos or Megalopolis, recently incorporated into the federation. However, the federal assembly showed that these small cities were now in a minority within the confederation, and by majority vote it held Aratus in power, electing him as strategos in the spring of 220. The assembly also approved mobilizing an army to intervene in support of Messenia, and asking for the collaboration of Messenia and Lacedaemonia, which after the defeat of Cleomenes were nominally allied to the Achaean League. They also agreed to call for the intervention of their Macedonian allies against the Aetolians.

But the diplomatic movements with which Aratus hoped to consolidate his dominance in the Peloponnese failed miserably. On the one hand, aetolians magistrates responded to the achaeans' protests by claiming that they had not started any war, and that Messenia's problems were not related to the Achaean League. If the Achaean League confronted the Aetolian League, they would be seen by the Greek public as aggressors, intervening in other people's conflicts to achieve Peloponnesian domination. On the other hand, both Messenia and Sparta were reluctant, having their own objectives in the

face of the coming war, and distrustful of the increasingly obvious expansionary policy of the Achaeans, who were recovering their dreams of unifying Greece, previously under the protection of Egypt, now under the protection of Macedonia. But the biggest setback was the lukewarm response from the Macedonian court itself. Philip summoned his allies in Greece, and although he gladly accepted the entry of Messenia into the alliance and offered him a diffuse solidarity in the face of the assaults suffered, he refused to intervene directly against the Aetolians.

For the Achaeans it was a very hard blow of prestige, in that it demonstrated to the whole of Greece that its alliance with the Macedonians placed them in a subordinate position, incapable of following an independent policy due to their military weakness, and in reality submitted as a tool of the strategic interests of Macedonia, a true hegemonic power in Greece. Again, the parallel with the powerless situation of European states after the Second World War, when the United Kingdom, France, or the Netherlands proved unable to defend not only their colonial interests in Asia or the Middle East on their own, but even to secure their own sovereignty against the presumed Soviet threat without the support of American military power in the second half of the 20th century.

As a clear demonstration of achaean vulnerability, some gangs of aetolian marauders, backed by Illyrian pirates, landed in the Peloponnese and looted the arcadian city of Cineta, a member of the Achaean League, which was in a very serious internal social and economic confrontation, very similar to the one that had shaken Sparta a few years earlier. These gangs later withdrew to Aetolia, without Aratus and the Achaeans, with the army in the mobilization phase, being able to intercept them. In this situation, Aratus again sent messages of help. Messenia and Lacedemonia again refused to intervene, postponing the sending of troops. They unwilling to encourage the outbreak of a conflict that would fortify the position of the League and its Macedonian protectors. The court of Philip of

Macedonia, on the other hand, finally decided to act, perhaps weighing the possibility that the League might end up succumbing to pressure from its neighbours. Orders were given to Taurion, general at the head of the Macedonian forces in the Peloponnese, based in Acrocorinth and Orcomenus, to intervene with his garrisons in support of the Achaeans against future aetolian actions. Meanwhile, the mobilization of an army in Macedonia began. Macedonia was taking steps forward to consolidate its power in Greece by tightening control over its allies in the Peloponnese.

The young King Philip came to Corinth with his army too late to intervene in the fighting, as Aetolians had already retreated to the north, but used his army to consolidate their rule in the region. The Spartans were renewing their internal crisis. The pro-social revolution faction had taken advantage of the instability in the Peloponnese to once again confront the oligarchs supported by the League. Philip came to Sparta to calm the tension. However, he did not intervene in the internal situation of the city and acknowledged the legitimacy of the demands of the people's party in exchange for the promise to remain within the Macedonian alliance. It was the first manifestation of the young King Philip's personal sympathy for the popular movements opposed to the economic and social control of the aristocracies. Macedonian kings had always shown their support for popular movements against local oligarchies, and for demagogues who dominated some cities as tyrants with the support of the people, as a way of gaining influence in the internal politics of cities. Perhaps Philip thought of extending their control over Greece by favouring "popular" governments, just as the Soviet Union used support for all kinds of popular uprisings and national independence movements as a way of gaining influence during the Cold War period in the 20th century. But in 220 his main concern was to subdue the Aetolian League, Macedonia's traditional enemy in central Greece. For that purpose, he returned to Corinth and convened a diplomatic conference, attended by all his allies.

The Corinth conference was held in September 220, and quickly became a chorus of complaints against Aetolians. The Aetolian League was accused of aggression on its borders by Achaeans, Epirots, Phocians, Boeotians, Acarnanians and Thessalians, all of whom remembered old quarrels and conflicts. It did not take long for the delegates, Macedonia and its allies, to vote unanimously for the war against the Aetolians, justifying it in the aggressiveness of the Aetolian League and in the need, once again, to fight 'for the freedom of Greece, to restore the independence and freedom of the cities, defending them from the aggression of the barbarians'. Philip was discovering the propagandistic tools necessary to justify and present to the Hellenic public opinion his actions aimed at the domination of continental Greece.

They subjoined a declaration that they would recover for the allies any city or land occupied by the Aetolians since the death of Demetrius, father of Philip. And likewise concerning those who had been compelled by circumstances to join the Aetolian League against their will, they pledged themselves that they should be reinstated in their ancient form of government, and should remain in possession of their cities and lands, without garrisons, exempt from tribute, and completely independent, in the enjoyment of their traditional constitution and laws. They also added a clause engaging to recover for the Amphictyonic Council its ancient laws, and its authority over the Delphic temple, of which it had been deprived by the Aetolians, who wished to control the affairs of the temple themselves. Polybius, The Histories, 4. 25

After this agreement, Philip moved to Aegium, where he solemnly renewed the treaty of alliance before the assembly of the Achaean League. This gesture, very welcome by the Achaeans, who gave the king all kinds of honours and privileges, showed the central role that Philip reserved for the League in his system of alliances. Aratus no doubt believed to understand that Philip was giving him the direction of the affairs of the Peloponnese under the benevolent tutelage of

Macedonian power. Philip then returned to his kingdom to prepare the next spring's campaign against Aetolian League. The Achaeans now had reason to hope that the year 219 would be the year of their final triumph. However, the expectations soon turned into disappointments, and into fears later.

First, Messenia, which had been officially accepted as an ally in the Corinthian assembly, refused to send troops or diplomatic support to the League if it was not previously conquered Phigalia, an Aetolian-controlled city on its border that they claimed was their ally. In his book, Polybius complains bitterly about this response, which also departed from the group supposedly closest to the ideas of the Achaean League in the messenian politics.

This resolution was by no means generally approved, but was forced through by the ephors Oenia and Nicippus and certain other members of the oligarchical party, who in my opinion were much mistaken and took a course which was far from being correct. That war is a terrible thing I agree, but it is not so terrible that we should submit to anything in order to avoid it. For why do we all vaunt our civic equality and liberty of speech and all that we mean by the word freedom, if nothing is more advantageous than peace? Polybius, The Histories, 4. 31

This had to be completely unexpected for the Achaeans, who were counting on the unconditional support of Messenia, especially if we think that the hostilities had started precisely when the Achaean League intervened to protect it from aetolian bands. More disturbing, secondly, was the situation in Sparta. After Philip's visit, and his acceptance of a populist party, which had undoubtedly revived the popular groups most in favour of the policy of social reform, the internal conflicts reactivated and led to a coup d'état in which all the magistrates were assassinated, which allowed the most radical supporters of the exiled King Cleomenes to return to power. Almost at the same time the news of the king's death in Egypt arrived, and the throne was taken by Lycurgus, a plebeian who soon became the

first populist tyrant of Sparta. The Spartans immediately established an alliance with Aetolian League against the Achaeans.

As if that were not enough, thirdly, the aetolian ambassadors sent to Sparta also obtained the support of Elis, the border region with Achaia on the western coast of the Peloponnese, famous throughout Greece for hosting the Olympic Games in the sanctuary of Olympia. The Greek anti-Macedonian bloc was beginning to take the form of an effective alliance. The Achaeans, who hoped that the intervention of Philip of Macedonia would give them a dominant position in the region, found themselves in that spring besieged in the south by Sparta, in the west by the elean confederation with aetolian support, and on the north coast by sea incursions by aetolian groups. Meanwhile, Philip remained in Macedonia, focused on the defense of its own borders. It was an election period, and Aratus, who was the outgoing strategist and therefore could not be re-elected, ran his own son, Aratus the Younger, as a candidate, with the intention of maintaining effective control of the political situation. However, Aratus' military inability was once again evident. Concerned about the Spartan threat to Megalopolis, he concentrated the Achaean forces in the south, allowing the aetolian gangs to plunder Aegira on the north coast and the Eleans, reinforced with an aetolian contingent, to penetrate the heart of the League and threaten Dyme, Tritaea and Pharae, after defeating the hastily organized local militias.

These defeats caused a commotion in the foundation of the federation. The threatened cities, Dyme, Tritaea, Patras, Pharae, Aegira, were not only the founders of the League. They had previously expressed their dissatisfaction with the progressive inclination of the confederation's centre of power towards the large Peloponnesian cities such as Sición, Argos and Megalopolis. With the bulk of the troops defending Megalopolis, the northern cities asked Aratus the Younger for urgent troop deployment. Polybius argues that the inexperienced strategos was unable to assemble the requested

reinforcements, but we must assume that in the strategy of his father, the true leader of the confederation, protecting Megalopolis from Spartan expansionism was much more important than preventing the action of looting gangs in the north. As a result, the northern cities received good words but no help. This resulted in a serious institutional crisis.

Hereupon the peoples of Dyme, Pharae, and Tritaea, despairing of help from the strategos, came to an agreement with each other to refuse to pay their contributions to the Achaean League and to collect a private mercenary force of three hundred foot and fifty horse with which to secure the safety of their lands. In acting thus they were thought to have taken a proper course as regards their own affairs, but the reverse of this as regards the League; for they thus became the initiators and establishers of an evil precedent and pretext of which anyone who wished to dissolve the League could avail himself. Polybius, The Histories, 4. 60

The crisis did not escalate further, and later returned to normality, but it demonstrated, as in 226, the essential weakness of the League: the emergence of conflicting interests among the cities within the confederation. In any case, the delicate military position of the Achaeans was maintained. His main ally, Philip V of Macedonia, was at the time successfully fighting the Aetolians in the north. At the end of the campaign, he returned to his kingdom without helping the discouraged Achaeans. At the beginning of 218 the Aetolian League and Sparta seemed in a position to take over the military control of the Peloponnese in the summer campaign, when the military genius of King Philip V, who was then in his early twenties, suddenly appeared. Instead of withdrawing to Macedonia, in the middle of winter, when military operations were paralyzed, he presented himself with six thousand select soldiers in Corinth, without anyone expecting him. He could not accept losing the solid base in Greece that his alliance with the Achaean League represented. Disregarding the difficulties of the season, snow included in the Peloponnesian mountains, he attacked. The

onslaught caught eleans and aetolians completely by surprise, derailing any chance of regrouping their troops. Philip was able to quickly occupy several cities, including Phigalia, which he handed over to the Achaeans, and to penetrate, without any notable opposition, into the heart of the elean territory, which he devastated at his discretion. Then he went to Tryphilia, a region in the southern part of Elis bordering Messenia, which he quickly subdued despite the reinforcements sent from Aetolia.

Meanwhile, in Sparta, internal instability continued, and a new revolt broke out, this time by the aristocratic party against the tyrant Lycurgus, with the active support of the Achaean League, where the origin and fibre of the conspiracy surely lay. The insurrection sought to bring the lacedaemonian oligarchy back to power, and achieve some achaean influence in Sparta before Philip conquered it, which seemed inevitable. The Achaeans began to look with fear upon Philip, so much in demand the previous year. It was one thing for Macedonian reinforcements to be obtained in the fight against Spartans, Aetolians and Eleans, and quite another that the King himself should take control of the Peloponnesian operations. Conflicts of jurisdiction had already erupted between achaean and macedonian officials, and within the macedonian court an imperialist party was being formed, in favour of the annexation of the small states allied to the Macedonian kingdom, party led by Apelles, Philip's chancellor.

In any case the revolt in Sparta failed, and Lycurgus remained in power. For Aratus, the greatest danger now was that Apelles would carry out his plans and reduce the League to the role of a client state, and mediatise the sovereignty of the federation, as had already happened with the Thessalians, the Boeotians or the Euboeans, which were then mere vassal governorates of the kingdom of Macedonia. When the spring of 218 came, Philip retired to Argos to reorganize his army, wait for the bulk of the troops and plan the next movements. The focus has now shifted to the Achaean elections. Aratus, foreseeing strong resistance to his own leadership, presented

Timoxenus, a former ally seasoned in office, as a candidate, but met with strong opposition from cities in the north, no doubt still resentful of the previous summer's crisis.

Moreover Apelles, the Macedonian Chancellor, with the King's acquiescence, set about intruding against Aratus, whom he saw as too active politician, too interested in maintaining the League as an independent state of Macedonia. As a result of these manoeuvres, supported both by the Macedonian bribes and by the old fidelities that cities such as Argos or Megalopolis maintained towards the Macedonian monarchy, Eperatus of Pharae, a man from the northern nucleus of the League, was elected strategos, and Aratus was removed from power. Very significantly, when summer came, Philip moved with his army into the territory of Dyme and Pharae, with the intention of entering in Elis from the north. In this way he sought to draw closer to the interests of the cities of the northern coast, the victors in the previous assembly, in order to increase their influence on the whole of Achaean League. After militarily defeating the Eleans in the border clashes, he tried to negotiate with them a benevolent peace to move the operations to Aetolia, but unexpectedly his proposals were rejected. From the shade, Arato still had many resorts to handle.

8

INDEPENDENCE OR SUBMISSION

In the summer of 218, the failure of Philip V's attempts to achieve the submission of the Eleans led to a confusing episode. Chancellor Apelles openly accused Aratus of secretly advising the eleian magistrates to reject peace. That seems plausible. Aratus could be worried and resentful with the Macedonians over the loss of their political leadership, and try to hinder the development of Macedonian power in the Peloponnese. We saw something similar when in 226-225 Aratus maneuvered to prevent any agreement between the Achaean League and the victorious Cleomenes of Sparta. As at the time, Aratus had the dual objective of preventing the hegemony of the Peloponnese from reaching the hands of a power outside the League, and of safeguarding his own personal leadership position at a delicate time. But Aratus managed to convince to the King Philip of his innocence in these maneuvers.

Something escapes us in the mist of the past. Perhaps a disagreement between Philip and his mentor Apelles, at the time the prominent figure in the Macedonian government, on

the policy to follow with the Achaeans. Perhaps the king did not approve of a strategy that pitted him against a solid ally, which could become a key instrument for consolidating his hegemony over Greece. They were the first steps in the political and personal rapprochement between Philip and Aratus, between the young king, in a moment of exaltation after a victorious campaign, and the veteran and prestigious statesman, with more than thirty years of political experience. The reason for the reconciliation was the king's lack of resources to continue his campaigns. The achaean assembly, meeting in Aegium to vote on these subsidies, was reluctant to approve them. The internal division, born the previous year, was maintained, but now it was Aratus and his megapolitan allies who led the opposition, which the strategos, Eperatus of Pharae, was unable to overcome. But Philip soon found the key to the problem.

He therefore persuaded the magistrates to transfer the Assembly to Sicyon and there meeting the elder and younger Aratus in private and laying all the blame for what had happened on Apelles, he begged them not to desert their original policy. Upon their readily consenting, he entered the assembly and with the support of these statesmen managed to obtain all he wanted for his purpose. For the Achaeans passed a vote to pay him at once fifty talents for his first campaign, to provide three months' pay for his troops and ten thousand medimni of corn, and for the future as long as he remained in the Peloponnese fighting in alliance with them he was to receive seventeen talents per month from the League. Polybius, The Histories, 5. 1

From that time on, Aratus became Philip's main political and military adviser. The idea of speculating on the ucronia of considering the situation in Europe after World War II if the USA had not participated in the liberation from fascism and Nazism is very attractive. No doubt the nations of Western Europe would have been forced to deal with a victorious Red Army that would have achieved military control of continental Europe. In fact, that is the situation that Greece faced at the end of the

3rd century BC, liberated by the military power of Macedonia. As we shall see, there were attempts to create a cordiale entente of interests. But we will also see that the important differences in how to arrange this collaboration, the relative position of each party, and the clash of social and economic interests between the Greek oligarchies and the populist macedonian propaganda led to the final rupture. Perhaps a direct relationship between the capitalist societies of Western Europe and the USSR would have ended in the same way, as it did with the ties between Germany and the USSR in the inter-war years.

Apelles had to withdraw from the Peloponnese, although he retained the king's confidence. He was entrusted him with the regency for as long as he remained in campaign. From Chalcis, where he established his headquarters, Apelles continued his intrigues against Aratus, and continued to maneuver to increase his influence among the officers of the Macedonian army. But Aratus had regained political control over Peloponnesian affairs. Just then, Philip decided to change his military strategy, no doubt at Aratus' suggestion. Instead of focusing on operations in the Peloponnese, as Apelles had defended, he set up a fleet, ready to attack the Aetolians on its territory. After a failed action on the island of Cephallenia, and in spite of pressure from the Apelles supporters in Army and the Messenians, harassed by Sparta, Philip moved his army to the aetolian coasts. Aratus had achieved his goal of keeping the Macedonians away from the Peloponnese. The Aetolians, whose army was fighting in Thessaly, were taken by surprise, and Philip could easily reach the political-religious center of the Aetolian League, the sanctuary of Thermum, and plunder it. The Aetolians hastily reorganized their troops, but Philip was able to withdraw to the coast without difficulty, with a valuable booty.

The supporters of Apelles in macedonian army, threatened by the growing influence of Aratus on the young king, tried to react, and organized an attack against him, which failed. From then on, King Philip began to distrust Apelles, and to strengthen

his relationship with Aratus. However, the role of the achaean leader, in the midst of a hostile Macedonian court, remained very precarious. In the Peloponnese the position of the Achaean League continued to be delicate, harassed by Eleans and Spartans. But Philip again showed his vigorous military leadership. In just seven days, he transported his army from the coast of Aetolia to the border of Lacedaemonia, surprising enemies and allies. He prowled unopposed throughout the Spartan territory, and ended up setting up his camp in front of the walls of Sparta. Rejected without difficulty the attempts of the tyrant Lycurgus to evict him from his positions, he left Lacedaemonia after demonstrating his total military superiority.

After the easy plunder of the main enemy territories, Elis, Aetolia and Lacedaemonia, The King Philip's prestige as a military leader grew, and he could look to the future with confidence. In those days, resting in Corinth, he received ambassadors from Rhodes and Chios, neutral states that, possibly at the suggestion of the Aetolians, called for the end of the war. Philip replied evasively, implying that he was interested in an agreement. It is obvious that he saw the possibility of taking advantage of the victorious campaigns of the year that was coming to an end. But Philip had to face a long incubated internal crisis. In the nucleus of his army, some high officials, supporters of chancellor Apelles, and very possibly against peace with the Aetolians and the role of Aratus with the king, instigated his soldiers about the question of the distribution of the spoils, and managed to get them to riot. Philip was hardly able to appease the protest, since the assembly of the Macedonian army traditionally had the capacity to stand up to the royal power on an equal footing. In these circumstances, Apelles, confident in the loyalty of some army commanders, decided to play his cards, and went to the Philip's headquarter with the intention of regaining his influence, imposing his tutelage on the king, whom he considered an inexperienced young man.

... ignorant of his own true position and convinced that if

he had a personal meeting with Philip he would order matters exactly as he wished, left Chalcis and hastened to the help of Leontius. On his arrival at Corinth Leontius, Ptolemaeus, and Megaleas, who were in command of the peltasts and the other elite corps, were at much pains to work up the soldiers to give him a multitudinous reception. After entering the city in great pomp owing to the number of officers and soldiers who had flocked to meet him, he proceeded without alighting to the royal quarters. He was about to enter as had been his former custom, when one of the ushers, acting by order, stopped him, saying that the king was engaged. Disconcerted by this unexpected rebuff, Apelles after remaining for some time in a state of bewilderment withdrew much abashed, upon which his followers at once began to drop away quite openly, so that finally he reached his lodging accompanied only by his own servants. Polybius, The Histories, 5. 26

Apelles came across a cruel disappointment. After several years of campaigning, the king's position in the Macedonian army was indisputable. King-soldier in the traditional, energetic and victorious manner, the soldiers could not doubt who their leader was, to whom they owed allegiance. Philip, in snubbing Apelles and his supporters, left them unarmed. A direct attack on the monarch, which would be universally rejected by the troops, was unthinkable. Apelles discovered, too late, that any possibility of participating in power was to gain the confidence of his young sovereign. It is not difficult to think of the figure of Aratus, stirring up the king's vanity in the face of opinions that he was too young and inexperienced. The supporters of Apelles fled in disarray. Philip then decided that it was time to put an end to what he already considered to be traitors trying to mediatise his power, and ordered the execution of the officers responsible for the riots in Corinth. The remaining Apelles conspirators either fled or committed suicide. Finally, the King ordered the execution of Apelles himself and his son. With his death, any idea of guardianship of King Philip, who had taken all the springs of Macedonian power to himself, was definitively

extinguished.

An unforeseen consequence of these events was the failure of the peace talks with the Aetolians, despite the efforts of the Rhodian and Chian ambassadors, traditional mediators in Greek conflicts. The Aetolian League was confident that the internal crisis of the King Philip's Court would lead to instability in the Kingdom of Macedonia. They also underestimated Philip's power. Winter was beginning and the military campaigns came to a standstill. Philip moved to Macedonia after assuring his allies, especially the Achaeans, that the war would continue the following year, in 217. The situation within the Achaean League remained extremely delicate in the meantime. Eperatus of Pharea, the Achaean strategos, proved to be an incompetent general, even more so than Aratus. During the summer he was unable to protect the northern cities that had elected him, and the Eleans, with the support of the Aetolians, even occupied Panachaeon Mountain, where the federal sanctuary dedicated to Zeus was built. The northern cities became demoralized and turned to passive rebellion again, refusing to pay their federal contributions, as they had done with Aratus the previous year.

On the other hand, the large cities of the south had their own problems, especially Megalopolis, where the upheavals caused by the destruction of the city by Cleomenes, five years earlier, affected mainly the most modest citizens, and threatened to ignite an internal social confrontation, especially serious because of the rivalry with nearby Sparta, always a dangerous enemy. Finally, the fiscal strike led to a crisis in the federal treasury, and desertion of the mercenary corps became widespread, accentuating the weakness of the confederation. Throughout the winter, the Achaean League seemed on the verge of collapse, each city concerned about its specific problems. To top it all off, the news came that the Aetolians and Spartans were preparing a new joint action against Messenia, which could leave the League definitively isolated within the Peloponnese.

That's when Aratus de Sición reappeared. Strengthened by his friendship with Philip of Macedonia and his political support, Arato quickly reaffirmed his position as leader of the League. He attracted the dissatisfied with the situation in which he himself had collaborated, by keeping the Macedonians away from the Peloponnese, offering an action plan. He was able to present his position of influence alongside Philip of Macedonia, and his prestige as a veteran politician, as a guarantee of his ability to cope with the crisis. The northern cities, like Dyme or Pharae, opposed to him the previous year, eventually accepted that he represented the only valid solution, and Aratus won the federal election in spring of 217 as strategos.

Aratus had found the mercenary forces of the Achaeans disaffected and the cities not at all disposed to tax themselves for the purpose of maintaining them, a state of matters due to the incompetent and careless manner in which his predecessor Eperatus had, as I mentioned above, conducted the affairs of the League. However, he made an appeal to the Achaeans, and obtaining a decree on the subject, occupied himself actively with preparations for war. The substance of the decree was as follows. They were to keep up a mercenary force of eight thousand foot and five hundred horse and a picked Achaean force of three thousand foot and three hundred horse, including five hundred foot and fifty horse from Megalopolis, all brazen-shielded, and an equal number of Argives. They also decided to have three ships cruising off the Acte and in the Gulf of Argolis and three more in the neighbourhood of Patrae and Dyme and in those seas. Polybius, The Histories, 5. 91

It was essentially a matter of reviving the faith that the federation was the solution to the problems of each of the cities. He took special care to ensure the protection of the cities of the North with warships, to avoid the repetition of the aetolians raids and internal recriminations of previous years. He also ensured the collaboration of the Messenians, threatened by Spartans and Aetolians, with the handing over of Phigalia. Finally, he mediated in the internal conflicts of Megalopolis,

reaffirming the unity between the confronted parties.

After calming the League's internal struggles and restoring confidence to the Achaeans, Aratus was able to chain several military successes over the summer. He managed to prevent concerted action between the Aetolians and Spartans against Messenia, an army under the command of hipparch Lycus of Pharae defeated the elean incursions twice in the vicinity of Dyme, and the achaean navy made several fruitful raids into the aetolian coast. The Achaean League had once again overcome the dangers that plagued it and maintained internal cohesion, but international events were dragging it into new difficulties. In the far west the confrontation between the Romans and Hannibal, the Second Punic War, had erupted with violence, and the Carthaginian, after leaving the Iberian Peninsula at the head of a large army, had crossed the Alps, defeated the Romans and entered northern Italy. All Greek politicians knew that from this war a hegemonic power would emerge throughout the Mediterranean. This perspective was at the centre of political interest and increased the desire for peace in Greece, so that it could face the foreseeable difficulties of the future.

9.

WESTERN THUNDERCLOUDS

The consolidation of the Achaean League in 217 was made possible mainly by the King Philip's campaign in central Greece, which retained most of the aetolian forces in the north. In the middle of that summer, the Aetolians again called for peace through Rhodes and Chios. Philip was vaguely interested, but continued operations, preparing for the transfer of his army to the Peloponnese to consolidate his dominance there. And just when he was in Argos, spectator of the Nemean athletic games awaiting the arrival of the bulk of his troops, he received the surprising news that the carthaginian general Hannibal Barca had defeated a Roman army in Trasimeno, in Etruria, until its annihilation. This opened up new possibilities, which he immediately consulted with his new advisor, Demetrius of Pharos.

Demetrius was a remarkable character. A greek condottiero, he had gained some influence in the adriatic coast in the service of the Kingdom of Illyria until his defeat by Rome in 229. He then put himself at the service of the Romans, and

shortly after, from his small kingdom in Pharos, he was engaged in piracy on the Adriatic coast. He became regent of the Kingdom of Illyria when he married Tritaeta, the mother of the heir to the throne, who was still a minor. He soon established close relations with the Macedonian court and participated, at the head of an Illyrian contingent, in the battle of Sellasia in 222, under the orders of Antigonos Doson. In 219 he was evicted from his kingdom of Pharos by the Romans, tired of his acts of piracy and concerned about the situation in the Adriatic before the imminence of war with Hannibal. After a year as a pirate captain, pursued by the Rhodians, protectors of trade in the Aegean, he placed himself at the service of Philip of Macedonia and quickly became his main adviser, the young king dazzled by the figure of the experienced adventurer, who had travelled all over the Greek coast from the Adriatic to the Aegean. Demetrius skillfully excited the king's ambition, and urged him to take advantage of the Roman defeat to Hannibal. With Rome weakened, Philip had within his reach the entire Adriatic coast, so well known to Demetrius that it would serve as a springboard to the rich Greek region of southern Italy. It was a question of repeating Pyrrhus' ambition sixty years later.

Demetrius seized on this opportunity to advise him to get the Aetolian war off his shoulders as soon as possible, and to devote himself to the reduction of Illyria and a subsequent expedition to Italy. The whole of Greece, he said, was even now and would be in the future subservient to him, the Achaeans being his partisans by inclination and the spirit of the Aetolians being cowed by what had happened during the war. An expedition, however, to Italy was the first step towards the conquest of the world, an enterprise which belonged to none more properly than to himself. And now was the time, after this disaster to the Roman arms. Polybius, The Histories, 5. 101.

Of course, we cannot be sure that Polybius is not overstating Demetrius' proposals, exaggerating them to justify the subsequent Roman intervention in Greece, but the action of the macedonian king in the following years makes us think that

at some point he took them seriously. In any case, it dragged Macedonia into the great Mediterranean conflict that was about to break out. Philip decided to pursue the chimera of an empire in Italy and agreed to make peace with the Aetolians. The achaean assembly agreed with him to start negotiations. The Aetolian League, weakened by last year's defeats, and pressured by the presence of a Macedonian army off their coasts, threatening a new invasion, were relieved by Philip's offers. After several rounds of talks, the final agreement in Naupactus in the autumn of 217 was surprisingly easy and benign for both sides, who were able to keep the conquests they had at that time. The reason for this speed is in the speech of Agelao, the aetolian strategos:

...whether the Carthaginians beat the Romans or the Romans the Carthaginians in this war, it is not in the least likely that the victors will be content with the sovereignty of Italy and Sicily, but they are sure to come here and extend their ambitions beyond the bounds of justice. Therefore I implore you all to secure yourselves against this danger, and I address myself especially to King Philip... For if once you wait for these clouds that loom in the west to settle on Greece, I very much fear lest we may all of us find these truces and wars and games at which we now play, so rudely interrupted... Polybius, The Histories, 5. 104.

Faced with the risks of the future, Greece was throwing itself into the arms of Macedonia, the only power capable of confronting the Western powers. But we must not deceive ourselves. There is no doubt that, for many Greeks, waving the rag of the conquest of Italy before Philip was an elegant way of keeping him away from his dreams of hegemony in Greece. The most important consequence was that Greek diplomacy began to look westward. Philip and his allies approached Hannibal, who offered the possibility of occupying the positions that the weakening of Rome would create in the west. But for states that distrusted the macedonian dominion, the option of using Rome as a possible counterbalance to Macedonian hegemony was

beginning to take shape.

Meanwhile, the Achaeans could believe that they were entering a period of peace, protected by their close alliance with Macedonia and the personal relationship between their leader, Aratus, and King Philip. Twice they had been in grave danger, harassed by Spartans and Aetolians, and on both occasions the macedonian intervention, first by Antigone Doson, then by Philip himself, had resolved the difficulties. In spring 216, one of Aratus' most loyal followers, Timoxenus, was elected strategos while the cities were preparing to return to normalcy, in the hope that a period of peace and prosperity was beginning under a benevolent hegemony of Macedonia.

As soon as the Achaeans had the war off their shoulders, electing Timoxenus as their strategus and resuming their normal customs and mode of life, 2 they set themselves, like the rest of the Peloponnesian towns, to re-establishing their private fortunes, to repairing the damage done to their lands, and to reviving their traditional sacrifices and festivals and various local religious rites. Polybius, *The Histories*, 5. 106.

At that time Philip V was preparing for his new plans for Rome. In late 217 he led expeditions against the Thracian and Illyrian tribes of the northern border of his kingdom to ensure a quiet rearguard, while increasing the experience of his troops and keeping them ready for the next campaign. During the winter he organized his expedition to Italy, and in the summer of 216 he concentrated his army and navy, and advanced by sea from Corinth to the Adriatic coast. However, the false rumour that a Roman fleet had sailed from Sicily caused panic and Philip hastily withdrew. An ancient parallel with the examples of Philip II's Armada in 1588, Napoleon's *Le Grand Armée* in 1805, or Hitler's Wehrmacht in 1940, off the coast of the English Channel. The great Roman naval superiority prevented, except in the event of an extraordinary circumstance, the repetition of a great invasion of Italy such as that of Pyrrhus of Epirus half a century earlier.

But that extraordinary circumstance happened just then, after the Macedonians had fled. In fact, Rome's survival depended on a gap of just a few weeks. The news, in mid-August, of the enormous Carthaginian victory in Cannas, with the simultaneous destruction of the two Roman consular armies, returned the spirits to Philip, who sent ambassadors to Italy with the aim of reaching an agreement with Hannibal for the transfer of the Macedonian army to Italy. After several vicissitudes, the ambassadors met with the Carthaginian general, signed an alliance pact and reached the agreement that the Macedonian intervention, once power of Rome had been destroyed, was useless. The Carthaginians would force the Romans, once defeated definitively, to abandon their conquests on the eastern coast of the Adriatic, which would be handed over to Macedonia.

This agreement did not reach Philip's ears in time. On the way back to Macedonia, the ambassadors were held back by the Romans, who thus discovered the alliance between Hannibal and Philip and, still shocked by the defeat at Cannas, a true large-scale Pearl Harbour for the historical subconscious of Roman society for many generations, were faced with a new threat from the East. Unlike many modern historians, the Romans did take the possibility of a Macedonian landing in Italy very seriously. The memory of Pyrrhus of Epirus, who had arrived in Italy and fought Roman Republic just over half a century earlier, was still alive. In the midst of a critical situation due to the lack of men and resources to confront Hannibal, and when Rome was reaching the extreme stage of enlisting slaves to fill the gaps in its ranks, the Senate ordered a fleet of twenty-five quinqueremes to be stationed in Brindisi under the command of praetor Marco Valerio Levino, to face the threat of Macedonian action across the Adriatic. We must never cast aside that fear, which Rome never forgot, of a Macedonian invasion, when we refer to Roman policy towards Greece in the following decades.

Meanwhile, Philip, ignorant of the agreement between his

ambassadors and Hannibal, and of their capture, sent another embassy, so news of Hannibal's partial assent to the alliance did not reach him until the beginning of autumn, when the sailing season was already ending. No doubt he must have been disappointed. His fantasies of universal dominion were reduced to Hannibal's promise to support him in the struggle for control of the Illyrian coast. Their energies would have to be directed elsewhere. This misunderstanding between Hannibal and Philip was perhaps decisive. If Philip had been delayed and received the news from Cannas with his navy in operational status, or had Hannibal's support to cross into Italy, it is unlikely that Rome would have been able to prevent his final defeat, but Italy was too small for the ambitions of the two warlords. Hannibal, by reserving for himself the control of southern Italy, had sealed his fate, although he did not yet know it.

From 216 onwards, Philip forgot about his imperial illusions and focused his efforts on Greece, so that there would be no other possibility of an effective collaboration with Hannibal. That allowed Rome to recover. At the end of the year, Philip returned to the Peloponnese, where a new opportunity to expand his hegemony appeared. Messenia, in the south-west corner of the Peloponnese, had had a dramatic history, somewhat similar to that of contemporary Poland. It lost its independence to Sparta during the 7th century B.C., a tragic defeat after which, according to the myth, its king Aristodemus committed suicide on the tomb of his daughter, sacrificed for him to propitiate victory. The survival Messenians have since become the servants of the Spartans, and for centuries their territory and work have sustained Sparta as a great Greek power, despite several failed rebellions. Its liberation did not come until the middle of the 4th century BC, when Epaminondas of Thebes defeated Sparta and forced it to leave Messina, which was organized as a confederation of independent cities. The Messenians tried from then on to remain on the sidelines of the conflicts of the time, and although they were alternatively confronted with Spartans, Achaeans and Aetolians, they

managed to maintain their autonomy. But his success in the face of external enemies was not enough to deal with the internal crisis.

As we saw in the Sparta of Cleomenes, social inequalities led to the emergence of a reform movement, favourable to the redistribution of land among citizens and the abolition of debts, which inevitably faced opposition from the landlord aristocrats. The conflict erupted violently in late 215 and soon degenerated into civil war. Philip, an ally of the Messenians, presented himself in Messene, the capital, as a mediator. As in Sparta a few years earlier, the Macedonian king took sides with the social reform movement, inspiring a violent revolution that caused the death of some 200 landowners, and the subsequent distribution of their land among poor citizens. Philip was now openly demonstrating as a defender of the underprivileged, at a time when revolutionary ideas were winning supporters all over Greece. Many stoic and cynical philosophers were propagating a social philosophy based on the rejection of wealth accumulation and the principles of political and economic equality of all individuals. The greek monarchs, we have already seen Agis and Cleomenes of Sparta and Antigonus Gonatas of Macedonia, supported these ideas and the demands for revolutionary reforms in order to present themselves as supporters of a new model of society, based on a monarchy that imposed an egalitarian order, in a parallel way to how the totalitarian states of the 20th century emerged from the philosophical principles of many 19th century thinkers. Philip V followed here a pre-existing tradition in his dynasty and lived in the political-social theories of his time, which would be maintained until the definitive Roman conquest, as we will see later on.

We must bear in mind that the Greek cities were under the control, on almost all places, of the oligarchic landlords , who followed a policy of local independence and resistance to the interventions of the macedonian kingdoms, both in Greece and in Asia Minor. By supporting social reform movements, Philip could count on a powerful lever in the internal affairs of cities.

Again, the modern parallel with the Soviet policy, throughout most of the 20th century, of supporting and sustaining any anti-liberal, anti-colonial or populist social or economic reform movement, whether or not it had Marxist ideological bases, with cases as Spain in the 1930s, Argelia in 1950s, or Cuba in 1960s. It was a way of gaining international influence and capacity for intervention in different regions of the greek world. Aratus of Sicyon arrived in Messene shortly after the revolution, without hiding his displeasure at what happened, which seemed to follow the model of the Lycurgus of Sparta and threatened to spread to the interior of the League. His son, Aratus the Younger, came to face Philip himself, although the dispute had no immediate consequences. The uchrony of a collaboration between the communist USSR and Western European capitalism in a post-war period without US intervention and without the Marshall Plan is shown to us in this ancient parallel as something impossible.

Distrust soon grew. In those days Philip, accompanied by his entourage, went up to the top of Mount Ithome, the sacred center of Messenia, to celebrate a sacrifice. What happened there is described to us by Polybius, although we cannot be absolutely certain of the complete historicity of the narrative. Admiring the fortress at the site, Philip asked his advisers about the possibility of establishing a garrison there. Demetrius of Pharos encouraged him to do so, since together with Acrocorinth and Orchomenus, Ithome would allow him to control the entire Peloponnese. Aratus was then invited to express his opinion, and replied with a barely veiled threat.

If without breaking faith with the Messenians you can keep this place, I advise you to keep it. But if by seizing and garrisoning it you are sure to lose all other citadels and the garrison by which you found the allies guarded when Antigonus handed them down to you, consider if it will not be better now to withdraw your men and leave good faith here guarding with it the Messenians as well as the other allies. Polybius, The Histories, 7. 12.

Apparently Philip was not disturbed, and left Messenia without further intervention, but his relationship with Aratus cooled down ever since. The achaean leader discovered definitively at that time the central objective of the Macedonian monarchy to impose sovereign rule over Greece, while the king Philip was beginning to explore the limits from which his strategy would have to face the opposition of the Achaean League. The collaboration between the Greek urban oligarchies and the social populism of the Macedonian monarchy was impossible.

Later the king invited Aratus to accompany him in his Illyrian campaign of 214, but he tried to convince him, unsuccessfully, to sign peace with Rome and to abandon his plans for expansion in the Adriatic. The news from Italy showed that the Romans, far from being discouraged by the catastrophic defeats of the previous years, were standing up to Hannibal and preparing for a long war, and although most Greeks were still counting on the victory of the Carthaginians, Aratus' political experience, and quite possibly his sympathy for Rome, indicated to him that the final outcome of the conflict was not so clear and could still take some time. But Philip, tired of his reproofs, thinking that his affairs in the Peloponnese had stabilized definitively, and with his mind fixed on the objective of controlling the Adriatic coast, ended up displacing him from his court, annoyed by an advisor who constantly contradicted him.

10.

THE END OF ARATO

In the summer of 214 Philip launched a new attempt to occupy the allied cities of Rome on the Illyrian coast. With the Romans focused on the war in Italy, he succeeded at first, and was able to conquer Oricum and begin the siege of Apollonia. But when he expected the latter to surrender, the fleet of Marcus Valerius Levinus, the Roman praetor in charge of the surveillance of the Adriatic, arrived. Again, the Macedonians were panicked, even though the Roman forces were far inferior. Levinus regained Oricum while Philip besieged Apollonia, and then, by a surprise attack, destroyed the Macedonian fleet and forced the king to retreat into the interior. Levinus was very skillful in using the only Roman advantage at the time, the control of the sea, which made it impossible for Philip to carry out major military operations on the coast, which could be hindered and surprised by the mobility of the Roman fleet. Frustrated, Philip withdrew to Macedonia at the end of the summer.

At the beginning of 213 the king reappeared in the

Peloponnese, no doubt to try to gain the support of his allies for a new campaign, but was now regarded with distrust after the events of Messenia two years earlier. He tried to enter in Messene there but the Messenians, possibly put on alert by Aratus, denied him entrance. Demetrius of Pharos offered to try a surprise assault to conquer the city, but failed and was killed in the attempt. Philip, furious, began to plunder the region, but could not occupy any city. Without achieving any of his goals, and very possibly disoriented after the loss of Demetrius, his main advisor, he ended up retiring and returning to Macedonia.

At that time, Aratus, who was now definitively removed from the Macedonian court, became seriously ill. In the time of Polybius everyone thought of poison, although it is not certain that it this was believed at the time. The illness was slow, and may have lasted several months. At fifty-eight years of age, it is difficult to pinpoint the cause, although it could be a natural disease.

While keeping it secret from everybody else, he could not refrain from revealing it to Cephalon, an old servant with whom he was very familiar. This servant waited on him during his illness with great assiduity, and on one occasion when he called attention to some spittle on the wall being tinged with blood, Aratus said "That, Cephalon, is the reward I have got from Philip for my friendship." Polybius, The Histories, 8. 12.

So Taurion made an intimate companion of Aratus, and gave him poison, not of a sharp and violent sort, but one of those which first induce gentle heats in the body, and a dull cough, and then little by little bring on consumption. Plutarch, Aratus, 52

It is not easy to see why Philip, accused of poisoning Arato, would gain advantage from his death. Although his relation had damped, Philip did not seem to have a clear substitute in the leadership of the League. Very significantly, after Aratus' death the king did not change his policy towards the Achean federation, which he continued to regard as an ally until the

end. He did not intervene, as far as we know, in its internal policy, and although it is true that it was to some extent neglected, it is also true that, as we shall see, new concerns arose in the north of Greece, in areas closer to Macedonia, which focused his interest.

In any case, Aratus died in Aegium as strategos of the League, and was buried there. Later, after an oracle in Delphi, he was given divine honors as a hero, and was transferred in a solemn procession to his home town of Sicyon. In Plutarch's time, in the second century AD, sacrifices were still offered to him on two dates of the year: the day of his birth and the day on which he came to power in Sicyon. But there is no better epitaph than the one dedicated to him by Polybius in his book.

He had so often held the chief office in Achaea, and owing to the number and importance of the benefits he had conferred on the nation, had fitting honours paid him on his death both by his own city and by the Achaean League. They voted him sacrifices and honours such as are paid to heroes, and everything in short which contributes to immortalize a man's memory, so that, if the dead have any feeling, he must take pleasure in the gratitude of the Achaeans and in the recollection of the hardships and perils he suffered in his life. Polybius, The Histories, 8. 12.

Aratus' death could have been, for the citizens of the Achaean League, what appeared to be the end of a period of fighting and war. The Peloponnese had been at peace since 217, and Philip's war with the Romans had to be seen as far away. Aratus would be perhaps, like Winston Churchill in the minds of the English of the second half of the 20th century as a source of pride but left behind, a symbol of the past, of a time of conflict and danger, inherent in the formation of the federation, fought by external and internal enemies. But by that time, with the exception of Corinth, in Macedonian hands, the expansion of the League, territorial and demographic, had reached its peak. The Achaeans saw themselves as a prosperous and stable state,

enjoying the benevolent protection of a powerful monarch. If there were confrontations between Aratus and Philip, if there were conflicts in Messenia or Lacedaemonia, these were matters of high politics, which did not foresee an imminent war.

In 212 Philip, without discouragement, returned to Illyria. This time he was lucky. Rome was at the limit of its capacity at the time, centred on the multiple scenarios of war with the Carthaginians, in Spain, in Syracuse, in Capua, in Taranto and elsewhere. Levinus' fleet was withdrawn for use in the blockade of Syracuse, so Philip was not hindered in his expedition. He took Lissus, on the Adriatic coast, a conquest that allowed him to secure control of the entire Illyrian coast, restricting Roman activity to the cities of the south coast, Epidamnus, Apollonia and Oricum. In 211 he did not appear to be in campaign, which might indicate that he had achieved his fundamental objective, to reduce Roman influence to the allied coastal cities, which was, in a sense, to return to the state before the beginning of the war in 216. He may have thought about seeking a peace agreement with Rome then, but events confronted him with the harsh reality.

That same year Rome managed, in a supreme effort, to recover the initiative in the war with Hannibal. The capture of Capua restricted the activity of the Carthaginian general to the far south of Italy, and the conquest of Syracuse isolated him from his bases in Africa. Rome again had a certain freedom of movement. In the fall, Levinus' fleet reappeared on the coasts of Aetolia, and he himself appeared before the federal assembly of Aetolians in Naupactus.

About the same time Marcus Valerius Laevinus, who had previously sounded the leading men in secret conferences, came on a swift sailing fleet to a council of the Aetolians already appointed for that very purpose. There he first set before them the capture of Syracuse and Capua, to convince them of success in Italy and Sicily, and in addition referred to the customary good treatment of allies as handed down to the

Romans by their ancestors. Some of the allies, he said, they had admitted to citizenship and to the same rights as themselves, others they kept in so favoured a situation that they preferred to be allies rather than citizens. The Aetolians would be held in all the higher honour inasmuch as they had been the first of the peoples across the sea to enter their friendship. Livy, The History of Rome, 26. 24.

The Aetolians, whose hostility towards Macedonia was manifest, and who hoped for the possibility of redressing their defeat in the Allied War seven years earlier, immediately accepted the offer, and signed an alliance treaty with Rome. The initiative of Praetor Laevinus, who was acting as an independent military commander on the Adriatic battlefield, and probably without any direct official intervention by the Roman Senate, would have far-reaching historical consequences for Greece, similar for Europe to the decisions in 1940 of Roosevelt to support the British war effort from a neutral position, or of admiral Stark to focus US military capability on the Atlantic and not on the Pacific. He was beginning a path that would inevitably lead to a clash with Macedonia, and which would push Rome to intervene, progressively with more energy, in Greek politics. Even before, in 219, Rome had acted on the Illyrian coast to strengthen its area of influence and Adriatic security, but now, in the midst of the harshest fighting of the Second Punic War, Rome's future entry into the Hellenic conflicts was being prepared. It is evident that in the Punic wars, unlike the United States in World War II, Rome always saw in the west, in Carthage, the main and immediate threat, where most of the resources and energies of the Roman Republic were directed there, but Laevinus' decisions in 211 definitely linked the destinies of Rome and Greece. Rome was already ready to intervene directly in Greek affairs, and this would have the consequence in the medium term that the fate of Greece would depend on the direct confrontation between the kingdom of Macedonia and the Roman Republic. But that would have to wait until Hannibal's defeat.

The irruption of Rome in Greek affairs, as an ally of the Aetolians, caused an important controversy in all Greece, which Polybius transmit to us with two speeches, those of Chlaeneas of Aetolia and Lyciscus of Acarnania, before the Spartan magistrates, which established the different positions of the Greeks before the new war. For the Aetolians and their allies, it was essentially a question of restoring the balance that existed before the Allied War of 220-217, and of fighting against the hegemony that Philip V of Macedonia imposed on Greece.

Men of Lacedaemon, I am convinced indeed that no one would venture to deny that the slavery of Greece owes its origin to the kings of Macedon, but the matter may be looked at thus. Polybius, The Histories, 9. 28.

The Acarnanians, on the other hand, and in this speech Polybius reflects the position of the Achaean League at that time, focused the crisis on the danger that the intervention of Rome represented for all of Greece.

In the past your rivals in the struggle for supremacy and renown were the Achaeans and Macedonians, peoples of your own race, and Philip was their commander. But now Greece is threatened with a war against men of a foreign race who intend to enslave her, men whom you fancy you are calling in against Philip, but are calling in really against yourselves and the whole of Greece. Polybius, The Histories, 9. 37.

But the enemies of Philip of Macedonia and the Achaean League were not prepared to miss the opportunity to count on the support of the great Roman power to take on their rivals in Greece. Sparta herself had been struggling for survival with Macedonians, Achaeans and Arcadians for more than a century, and she could not doubt that the appearance of Rome was a gift she could not refuse. In the treaty between Aetolia and Rome were included as allies Eleans and Spartans, allies of the Aetolian League, some kinglets of Illyria and Thrace, always under great pressure from the Macedonians, and the growing kingdom of Pergamon. This kingdom had emerged at the

beginning of the 3rd century B.C. in conditions very similar to those which gave rise to the development of the Achaean League.

After the death of King Lysimachus, one of the Diadochi, in 281, Philetaerus, one of his eunuchs, commander of his garrison in Pergamon, a city in West Anatolia, declared himself independent governor. At his death in 263 ceded his authority to Eumenes, his nephew. His successor, Atalo I, after successfully fighting the Galatians, tribes that were part of the great 3rd century Celtic invasion that had settled in the region, expanded his territorial base and was able to proclaim himself king in 240, creating a small state with a way out to the north coast of the Aegean. Under pressure from Macedonia, Bithynia, the Galatians and the Seleucids, he sought naval and commercial collaboration with Egypt and Rhodes, through which he established diplomatic and commercial contacts with Rome, favored both by the myth that Rome had its origin in the flight from Aeneas of Troy, whose remains were in Pergamon territory, and by the Roman interest in the cult of Cybele, the mother goddess, whose sanctuary was also in Pergamon territory. The treaty of 211, and the subsequent cession to Rome in 205 of the sacred stone from the altar of Cibeles on Mount Ida, on which the proconsul Valerius Laevinus acted as ambassador, allowed him to turn these contacts into an official alliance, an objective long pursued, which would later make Pergamon the most important point of support for Roman politics in the Greek world.

For Rome, the alliance with Pergamon meant not only the diplomatic support of an important state, but above all the assistance of a large fleet in the Aegean. At the beginning of 210 Laevinus, elected consul in Rome, obvious result of the recognition of his diplomatic action in Greece, and satisfied with the new alliances, whose forces he considered sufficient to keep Philip at bay and to make him forget any hypothetical plan of invasion of Italy, withdrew his legion from Greece, leaving only the fleet under the command of Praetor Publius Sulpicius Galba.

On the contrary, in the Achaean League, the treaty signed between the Romans and the Aetolians, and the generalization of war to the entire Greek world represented a return to the conflicts of ten years earlier. As an ally of Macedonia, it was once again confronted with the Eleans, Spartans and Aetolians, with the aggravating circumstance that the Roman intervention now assured its enemies the dominion of the sea, and kept Macedonia occupied away from the Peloponnese. The Achaeans again faced an uncertain fate shortly after the disappearance of their most charismatic political leader.